

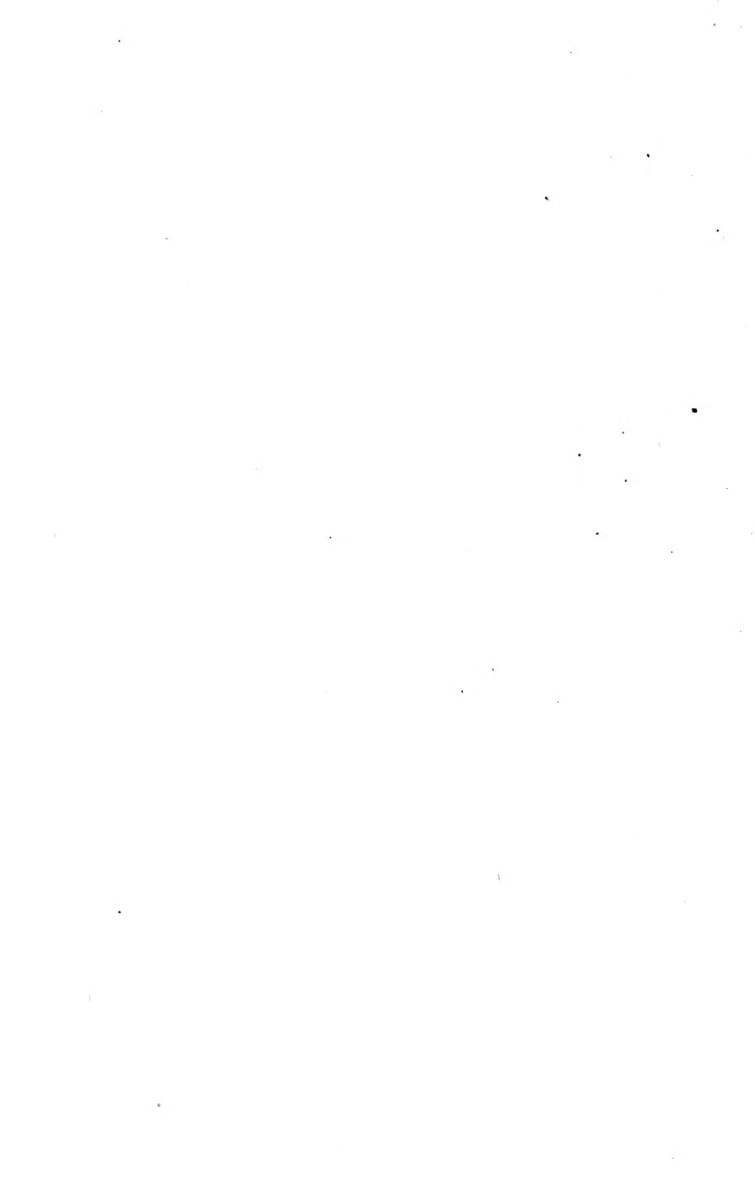
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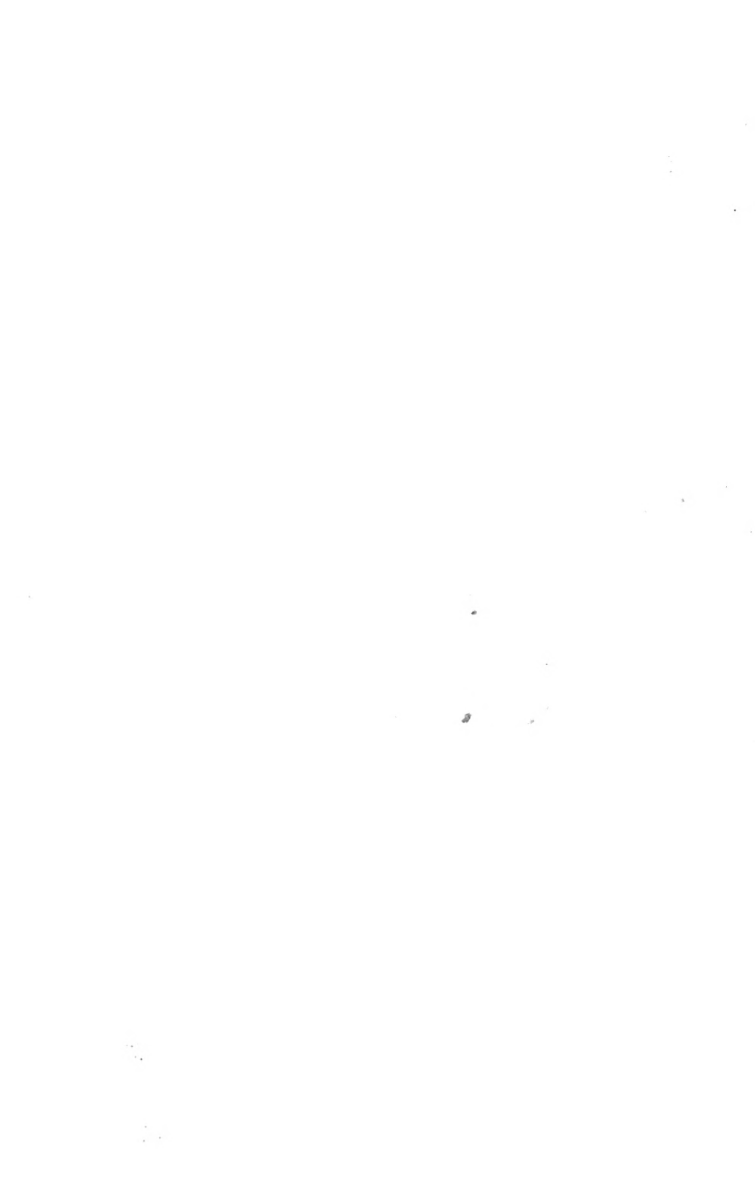
BY



★Publishers' Weekly

Feb. 08

(Fitzgerald)



UPPER ROOM MEDITATIONS

BY

BISHOP O. P. FITZGERALD

“My meditation of him shall be sweet.”

Psalm civ. 34.

NASHVILLE, TENN.; DALLAS, TEX.
PUBLISHING HOUSE OF THE M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH
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Handwritten text, possibly a signature or title, which is extremely faint and illegible.

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Just a Word.

WHILE shut in from bodily disability and shut out from the outside world, these meditations came unto me. They began with the one on the tuning of Elijah by the minstrel's playing for the touch of God, and ended, as the reader will see, with the joyful "Amen" of the Holy Spirit and the bride to the promise of the speedy coming of the Lord. My own soul was blessed by these Meditations. In the hope and with the prayer that they may bless other souls, they are printed.

O. P. FITZGERALD.

NASHVILLE, 1902.

(3)

Confidential.

AFTER naming this book of "Upper Room Meditations," my attention was called to the fact that a writer on the other side of the Atlantic had published a volume with almost the same name. After thinking a little over the matter, I said to myself: "Let it stand. The books will not get in each other's way." In some of these Meditations my readers will recognize former acquaintances. The scope and plan of the book were enlarged and changed somewhat as its preparation for the press progressed.

O. P. FITZGERALD.

NASHVILLE, 1902.

Prologue.

IN the opening verses of the Bible there is an intimation of the sublime truth that everything in the universe of God, both physical and spiritual, is under law. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." When the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, then came life and light, order and beauty. From the revolutions of a planetary system to the fall of a sparrow there is nothing capricious or arbitrary or fortuitous in the divine administration. This truth is the key that will unlock many mysteries in our study of God's ways in his dealings with us as revealed in his Word and known by our experience. In the chapters that follow it is hoped that the kindly reader will discern this truth as a golden thread running through the whole. And we will not forget that the Spirit of God is his own best interpreter.

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TUNING FOR GOD'S TOUCH.

(11)

“Elisha said: . . . Now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him.” (2 Kings iii. 14, 15.)

(12)

Tuning for God's Touch.

IN a grave national crisis God looked for a man to lead his chosen people, but found none. This means that when God would inspire a man, there must be at hand a man to inspire. Natural gifts and antecedent preparation are factors in conjunction with the touch of God. This is a law never disregarded, but varying in different cases in the methods of its operation. God reads men's hearts. He knows them as they cannot know each other. He sees a hero where human judgment sees nothing of the sort beneath the mantle of modesty. He sees a scheming or cowardly braggart where men's duller vision perceives, or thinks it perceives, only what is assumed. God sees a saint where human judgment discerns nothing beyond the dead level and routine of spiritual mediocrity; and he sees a hypocrite where men's duller senses discern only what is visible on the surface and hear only what the pretender claims for himself. The natural and the supernatural are parts of one system, and work together without jar or confusion wherever and whenever brought in touch in the government of God, who is Lord of all. This correlation will be more and more clearly seen as the world

moves on its course. And of one thing we may be sure—namely, that the unification of the two parts of God's creation will not result in the elimination of the supernatural, but in the lifting of the lower or natural higher and higher until in a sense diviner and more complete than we can now apprehend the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

Elisha was God's chosen prophet. He was the successor of Elijah, and had been trained under the eye and disciplined by the methods and molded under the influence of that mighty man of God. He was divinely accredited and providentially furnished for the solemn and weighty functions of his sacred office. The people wanted a message from God, who was ready to give it, and Elisha was to be the medium through whom it was to be declared. The people were waiting, and God was ready. But Elisha, his prophet, was not quiet enough to hear the voice of the Lord; the chords of his being were not tuned for the touch of God. With an intuition that meant genius, and perhaps something beyond, he called for a minstrel. He knew that such music as he called for had charms to soothe the troubled breast and prepare the expectant soul for the touch of God. The minstrel played

and the prophet listened with ear attent and heart lifted Godward. What was the nature of the instrument played upon, what was the nature of the music he made, whether or not he also sang as he played, we are not told. The player was a minstrel, bless his tribe! It may be that he sang as he played one of the songs of Zion in the minor key; or in view of the impending battle, it may be that it was one of those martial airs that kindle the fires of valor in the patriot's soul. There is a law here—the law of correspondence between the body and the soul. The lachrymal glands, the risible muscles, the sentiments of love and of adoration, respond to the music that makes a channel of communication between body and spirit. Holy music makes a channel for the Holy Spirit. Satan's music makes a channel for the arch deceiver. The perversion of this gift of music is in keeping with what meets our gaze everywhere in this probationary sphere.

It was not accidental that holy music is made a part of the worship of God in his Church. This is one of God's ways of opening a channel for the inflowing of the water of life to receptive worshipers. The immediate disciples sang a hymn in preparation for Gethsemane and Cavalry night at

hand; their successors through the ages have braced their souls to meet sorrow and pain and death by thus admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs—that means something more and better than an operatic solo or the strainings and squeakings of a mechanical quartette that knows how to sing by note but has never for one moment felt what it is to make melody in their hearts to the Lord. Moody and Sankey (the God-commissioned evangelist and the sweet singer of Israel) preached and sang in our day in a way that made a channel for saving grace to many souls. The thought seems pertinent: to what extent was the great evangelist himself indebted to the gifted singer whose holy song tuned his soul for the touch of the Holy Ghost? The law for Elisha was the law for Moody. The Spirit that touched David touched Charles Wesley. The songs of Zion are the music to which her hosts keep step in their march to the promised time of her final triumph when the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. The songs of the Salvation

Army, with the plain, true gospel they preach, are now making channels through which the water of life is carried to the perishing multitudes in our own and other lands. Keep up your singing and your marching, ye soldiers of Jesus Christ. Let your psalms and hymns roll forth from the mighty congregations in the thunder-swells of a holy enthusiasm under the baptism of the Spirit of God. Sing your spiritual songs in the great congregation on fit occasions, or in the little assemblies where two or three are gathered together in the name of the Master, or in the chamber of death where the dying saint may thus be greeted last by holy music expecting to meet it first in heaven. But let your spiritual songs be spiritual indeed—not doggerel ditties, nor namby-pamby jingles, nor the mere catch-words that intrude into sacred places too often in the name of spiritual songs.

A memory: Before I had gotten into my teens, one night after getting into my bed in the upstairs room I heard my mother in a low, sweet voice singing a missionary song. It thrilled my boyish heart as I lay and listened, and gave me such an impression of the gladness of the gospel and of the peril of souls that have not heard its tidings of great joy as I had never felt before and have never

lost, as I solemnly believe. The words of the song and the music of her voice are with me yet, and something more, let me say in all humility: the touch of God that was even then tuning my soul for the touch that was to be decisive at a later time.

Another and later: Within the bounds of one of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, there had been a spirited and at times rather sharp controversy concerning the doctrine of holiness. This contention was carried on in the newspapers and elsewhere until it seemed to be an accepted fact that there were two opposing parties among the brethren. It is at least certain that some of them spoke as partisans, and even a dispute on holiness becomes unholy when a partisan spirit prevails. They were good men; but, like Paul and Barnabas, they differed, and the friction was felt and deplored by them all. Pending an ordination service one day during the session, the writer of this chapter made a short talk magnifying the love which is the fruit of the Spirit and the essence of holiness, and concluded by proposing the singing of one of our sweet and deep-toned standard hymns defining in Bible language what holiness is, and the conditions of its attainment, and breathing a prayer for the blessing in

the present tense. A clear-voiced brother led the song; the brethren joined in the singing. A sort of awe fell upon them as the song proceeded stanza after stanza, and it was evident that they prayed while they sang. The answer they sought came—not as a rushing, mighty wind filling the house, nor with visible tongues of flame, but in a baptism of love that made the place the house of God and the gate of heaven. A brother rose from his seat and, crossing over to where sat one with whom he had held a contention, offered him his hand; the next moment they were clasped in each other's arms. With rapt faces and wet eyes they sang on, the tide of spiritual power rising higher and higher. It was the breath of the Lord, the baptism of the Holy Ghost; and the last vestige of party spirit was swept away then and there. The ordination waited while the brethren glorified God and testified of his gift. Not an unkind or hasty word was heard during the remaining days of the Conference session. Years have elapsed since then, yet the blessing of that hour abides with some who were there. The melody then made in their hearts is with them still. They were then and there tuned for God's touch in answer to their need and their prayer, and it is to-day something more than

a memory: it is a permanent acquisition to the treasures of their souls, a blessing of the Lord that maketh rich and addeth no sorrow therewith.

To the soul whose attitude is right toward God everything becomes a channel of grace. To the responsive soul every touch of God prepares the way for another, and another, and another, in an endless series, with wider vision and higher inspiration. The grace that abides with him also abounds unto him. He that gives grace now will give glory hereafter. The apostle's thought and hope thus reached a climax in the closing words of the third chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians: "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." This world in which God has placed us is the best possible world for his gracious purpose concerning us, conserving our safety, promoting our upward progress here, and culminating in the endless blessedness of immortality brought to light in the gospel.

“A STILL, SMALL VOICE.”

(21)

“And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.” (1 Kings xix. 12.)

(22)

A Still, Small Voice.

THIS was God's usual way. He was not in the wind nor the earthquake nor the fire. He was passing by, and these phenomena of nature attested the immanence of the invisible God, by whom were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers, by whom and for whom all things were created, who is before all things, and by whom all things consist. This tremendous exhibition of divine power arrested the prophet's attention, rebuked his petulance, and made him quiet enough to hear the voice of God that was to instruct him for the right performance of the duties of his arduous and urgent mission.

As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. The unrighteous man must forsake his thoughts, change his habitual temper of irreverence and indifference, before he can return unto the Lord and hear the still, small voice that assures him of mercy and pardon. The practical atheism that banishes from the mind the thought of God gets what it bargains for, and that which began as a foolish habit ends

in a fatal collapse of spiritual capability. The disused talent is lost. The writer of the one hundred and nineteenth psalm, that rich mine of spiritual wisdom, says: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." The prodigal son described in the gospel "came to himself" before he started back to his father's house. To be able to hear God's still, small voice your thought must be turned toward him and your ear attent to catch his message.

The petulant spirit of the prophet was rebuked and expelled before he was prepared to hear the still, small voice. In his heart a whining pessimism and subtle egotism mingled. It was a bad combination: it made him uncharitable toward his brethren and impatient toward God. His was a great, brave soul; but he was tired and sad and lonely, and his poor human nature needed the manifestation of the Almighty One before he could listen to the voice that spoke to his inner ear. Like Moses, Elijah had seen the fringes of the glory of God, and was thereby awed into adoration and awakened to responsiveness.

Thus the prophet was made quiet enough to hear the still, small voice. This is God's way: the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the fire come to us

in the commotions, calamities, and catastrophes of life in this world into which sin has brought disorder and death. They make us pause, they compel us to think, they make us quiet before God, they prepare us to hear the voice to which our ears have hitherto been closed. To-day that voice speaks to you: harden not your hearts. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

But you need not wait for the whirlwind, earthquake, or fire. Perhaps you have already had the experiences which they might symbolize. The one thing needful is that you shall be quiet enough to hear the still, small voice. Whenever and wherever you are thus ready, you will hear the voice. God has not left himself without witness. Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man. The Holy Spirit has been poured out upon all the world. Whosoever will may take of the water of life freely. To-day ought to be the day of salvation for you. Solitude is not the sole condition of stillness in the sense in which I am speaking of it here. In the day that you seek the Holy Spirit's presence with all your heart, you will find Him. The promise is unto us, and to our children, and to all that are afar off—the promise of the

grace that shall tune the willing soul for the touch of God.

The still, small voice spoke to John Wesley when he was reading the commentary of Martin Luther on the eighth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Roman's. He tells us that he felt his heart "strangely warmed" as he read. He was tuned for the touch that he received, because he had, so to speak, entered into his closet and closed the door, shutting himself in with God, who is a Spirit and seeketh such to worship him as worship in spirit and in truth.

Wherever there is an inquiring and receptive soul there is an answering Voice.

THE BRUISED REED AND SMOK-
ING FLAX.

(27)

“A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench.” (Isa. xlii. 3.)

(28)

The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax.

THE pathos of this passage centers in the fact that it refers to the suffering Christ. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. He was tempted in all points like as we are. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was one of us, very man as well as very God. "It behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." That is the way the holy apostle puts it in the closing verses of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Walk softly: we are on holy ground.

Ah, yes! When this meditation was first in my mind, the foregoing paragraph was written. And then came weakness and pain and waiting. The bruised reed and smoking flax were in my thought, and the words seemed to hold for me a secret that could be learned in one way only—to follow where

our merciful and faithful High Priest hath led the way.

Christ was bruised for our iniquities. It pleased the Lord to bruise him, so that he might feel for the bruised. The feeble, the sorrowful, the sin-burdened, belong to this class. The reed is a fragile plant, easily "shaken with the wind," as St. Matthew puts it. The very weakness of a human soul commends that soul to the mighty Saviour, who came to seek and to save the lost. The sorrows that are beyond the touch of human sympathy and help he can understand and heal. The burden of sin is lifted by him who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

He not only did not quench the light of nature, but superadded the light of revelation in dealing with the human race—so a notable exegete reminds us. The thought that comes here is that of the patience and long-suffering of God in his dealings with us. Smoking means dimly burning, smoldering; the flame is not quite extinct. The long-suffering of the Lord is salvation. The conscience, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, is supplied with grace as a lamp wick with oil. It is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world—this Spirit of the Lord, the light that shin-

eth in the darkness as well as in the blaze of day, is as pervading in the spiritual sphere as is the air we breathe in the natural world. There is mystery here, but also certainty. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Where there is any measure of spiritual life and receptivity, everything that touches the soul becomes a channel of grace. The holy apostle Paul saw this so clearly, and felt it so deeply, when he indited the closing words of the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, that we catch the sweetness of his joy and the swell of his triumph as we read: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." He had already said (Rom. v. 3, 4, 5): "We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

This secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. Some have been slow learners; but they have had line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. The golden links of providential purpose and gracious helpfulness have never been broken. Heavenly aspiration has been kept alive, religious purpose has never been wholly abandoned. The tunings for the touch of God have never ceased.

Every touch of God tunes the soul for another touch. "The answer of the tongue, and the preparation of the heart in man, are from the Lord" is an Old Testament affirmation, true to its core as it was meant to be taken. Its meaning may be more clearly seen if we read it in connection with what the apostle Paul says in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." God works, and we work. All that we need is sincerity; that will cause us to keep trying, and that is the one and only condition of God's helping. For all the purposes of our Christian lives we are as strong as God is, however weak and unworthy in ourselves. The bruised reed does not break, the smoking flax is not

quenched. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart. Not the self-righteous, but the self-emptied, are accepted of him. To will and to do are right in their place. To wait, and still to wait, when strength is gone, in patience possessing our souls, pleases him no less.

On a dark and stormy afternoon I went to see a suffering woman in a Nashville infirmary. I had a message for her from the Lord. On entering the room where she lay I saw that she was dying. She was in great agony and was gasping for breath, her wasted body convulsed every few moments with fresh pangs of sharpest pain. Her nerves were in such a state that even her mother's voice was almost a torture. Her husband held her thin hand in his in silent grief as she turned her dying eyes to look into his face. She was too far gone to be prayed with in the usual sense of the word. But the message I had brought for her was warm in my heart. I asked her if she could join in silent prayer, and she signified assent. Kneeling at her bedside, I prayed for two things: first, that the invalid might be able just then and there to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ with all her heart; and secondly, that it would please the Lord to give her then and there such a sense of his love as would satisfy

her soul and comfort ours. A great stillness came upon the praying circle, and there was no sound or motion on the part of the sufferer on the bed. The blessing touched my own soul as I prayed, and at the last the words of supplication came from my lips audibly: "Blessed Lord, help thy daughter to trust thee with her whole heart. Blessed Lord, give her to feel at this moment a satisfying sense of thy love filling her soul." "Amen!" she said as we rose from our knees, and on her face was that light which reflected from our Immanuel's face which I have seen nowhere else except on the faces of the dying ones who die in the Lord. Her four months of bodily agony had not broken this bruised reed nor quenched the smoking flax. Her suffering had attuned her soul for this touch of God.

MY SONG IN THE NIGHT.

(35)

“I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune
with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.”
(Psalm lxxvii. 6.)

(36)

.

My Song in the Night.

GOD gives us help by the remembrance of past mercies as well as by the promise of future blessings. All things are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's—so the apostle states the case.

This seventy-seventh psalm might seem to have been written for the special profit of some high-strung, sensitive souls of this present generation. Asaph, its author, was so troubled that he could neither sleep nor talk. That scourge of our high-pressure civilization, sleeplessness, held him in its clutch. Nervous debility and mental depression possessed him—the one to a large degree inseparable from the other. What did he do? He did not dose himself with nostrums after the manner of some in this our day. He did not talk much in the day of his trouble; his friends had troubles of their own, every one of them, and he spared them the dreary repetition of his symptoms. If there were doubt in his soul and clouds in his sky for the time being, he did not think it worth his while to inject his doubts into other minds or to becloud the souls of others who like himself were fighting

hard battles of their own. A good thought came to him, and he acted on it at once: he meditated of God's work and talked of God's doings. Up there in that region he found broader vision and purer air. Too constant introspection will make morbidness in any soul. Another Old Testament singer and sufferer said in a season of trouble: "I will look to the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Mounts Zion and Moriah, the sacred peaks, were in sight, and symbolized the protection of Jehovah, who had recorded his name at Jerusalem. It is a curious saying of David in the thirty-second psalm: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." His heart and his thought had been turned from God, and both his soul and body were distressed. The soul was made for God; cut off from him, it droops and withers. He went to God with confession of sin and found forgiveness, and then with peace in his soul he trusted in God's promises and his soul was filled with a great joy. It is not strange that he became demonstrative and hortatory in closing the psalm: "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." He called to remem-

brance his song in the night, and therefore he felt glad and strong. Glad and strong—the power and the joy of an endless life are in the words.

Many nights had he been kept sleepless from trouble; here he speaks of one night when he had been kept awake by joy, and had sung his song of praise to God. Whoever was the author of this Psalm, we may not doubt that he remembered many seasons of this sort. He could join in the song of another singer who said: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” He could not remember them all; they were more than could be remembered. He sang out his song, and therefore he did not lose the tune.

Every man who deals sincerely with the Lord and with himself during a religious life that runs through a course of years will have cause to remember some experience of this sort that stands out with special vividness in his consciousness.

It came to me in a dream of the night. I had passed a day of severe physical suffering, and lay down for the night in the same condition. My sleep was fitful and burdened with the distressful images peculiar to persons afflicted with that comprehensive ailment called nervous prostration, meaning nothing in particular to those who never

had it, but the synonym of almost everything distressing to its victims. Passing in rapid transition from one experience to another, after the manner of such dreamers, it came to pass that after a particularly painful episode I was called on to lead in prayer in a little company present. Instantly, as it seemed to me, the substance of the prayer, and even the very wording of it, came to me as follows: "O Lord God, our heavenly Father, it is at this moment our uppermost thought that if we more frequently made our prayers the expression of thanksgiving, we would have much more for which we should be continually thankful. And, O Lord, when we think of all the mercies we have received from thee in the past, and all for which we hope in the never-ending future that stretches out before us, we feel like beginning now a song of praise that will never cease. Amen." Heaven came into my soul with that song in the night—and it is there yet.

POWER FROM ON HIGH.

(41)

“ And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you:
but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued
with power from on high.” (Luke xxiv. 49.)

(42)

Power from on High.

IN making this promise to his disciples Jesus answered a thought that was in their minds and a desire that was in their hearts. Power was what they wanted. But it was power of a different sort for a different purpose. Their minds were not yet free from the delusive expectation of a temporal Messiah. Their hearts were thrilling with the thought that the time had come when the yoke of Roman tyranny should be broken, and their hated oppressors driven from Israel's sacred soil. It is not altogether discreditable to these men that they clung so tenaciously to this hope. They were Jews; they were patriots; they were men of ardent temperament and strong conviction. They possessed the qualities that, developed under the training of the Master, fitted them for a yet grander movement. They wanted power. This passion for power somehow got into the human heart, and there it remains. When the archfiend tried to touch this chord in his final assault upon the Son of God he acted from a long study of human nature and an intimate acquaintance with the human heart. The love of power is an indestructible

element of the moral nature of man. The disciples wanted power, and the Master promised to give it to them. They did not understand the true meaning of the promise. He dealt patiently and tenderly with them, seeking to educate them for that kingdom in which service, not lordship, was the badge of honor. But they were slow learners. "Even the devils are subject unto us!" they exultingly exclaimed, returning after their first miracles in the joy and pride of conscious power. It was not so much that the suffering were relieved, that men were ready to hear their message, and that the kingdom of heaven was opened unto them. Mark the gentle correction: "Rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." He read their hearts. He knew that the love of power such as they wanted made men selfish, exacting, and cruel. On another occasion he rebuked the whole body of the disciples for their unseemly contention as to who should be greatest in the coming kingdom. Setting a child in the midst, and then taking him in his arms, he said: "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." The

two brothers, James and John, went so far as to ask for themselves the two best places. They could not wait, but wanted to make sure in advance, so that when the "appointments" were read out, they themselves would be provided for, let their brethren fare as they might. Shame on you, John! Shame on you, James! Yes, shame on you, shame on me, shame on us all; for we all stand on the same plane until lifted higher by a power not our own. The disciples were slow learners, but the Master gave them lesson upon lesson. By the parable of the talents he sought to give proper direction to their passion for power, telling them that fidelity in service would be rewarded by the bestowment of power for larger service. When he girded himself and washed their feet he was teaching them the same truth—namely, that he that would be greatest as God measures greatness must be servant of all. Though these lessons were not understood at the time they were given, they were not lost; they were seeds that in due time germinated. They did not understand the promise that they were to be endued with power; but they believed in a vague and shadowy way, they clung to it, and obeyed the command to wait for its fulfillment.

In wonder and hope the disciples waited. There is no record of what they thought and said during those ten days of alternating hope and fear, of vague conjecture, of subdued yet soul-thrilling excitement. All they knew was that a great movement was impending in which they were to be the chief actors, and for which they were to be endued with power from on high. They had no difficulty in their minds as to the source of this promised power. It was to be the power of the crucified and risen Christ. But in what manner would the fulfillment come? They waited. The days crept slowly by; each rising and setting sun was counted; their pulses beat more and still more quickly as they drew nearer and still nearer to the solution of the mystery. Their waiting prepared them for the fulfillment of the promise. It was a test and a proof of their fealty to their Lord. They all waited together. Judas had already apostatized and hanged himself, and there was now no traitor in the band. Calvary had melted and molded them, and henceforth they could not be divided. Sorrowing, bewildered, expectant, they looked into each other's faces with sympathetic inquiry, and clung together like orphan children just from the grave of a buried mother. The half-forgotten

words of Jesus were remembered by them, and began to shape themselves into new meanings. In the shadow of the wondrous facts of the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension a strange awe fell upon them, and, mingling with the carnal conceptions and hopes that still clung to their minds were dim forecastings of higher things. They breathed the air of the supernatural, and they were chastened, ennobled, spritualized. Waiting for a manifestation from the unseen world, the voice of strife is hushed among them. They grew rapidly in moral stature during these days of waiting. Others have had to wait as they waited; and in the end discovered the great truth that no promise of God of this sort in the moral sphere can be fulfilled independently of the coöperation of the beneficiary. God is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. His disposition toward his creatures has never changed, is incapable of change. Yet in his dealings with them he acts according to law. The free agency and consequent moral accountability of man are recognized in all his dealings with the human race. Therefore he can impart no more light than there is capacity to receive; he can give no more grace than man is ready to accept. We cannot fully understand these principles of the

moral government of God, but we may rest assured that he is saving the world as rapidly as it can be done in conformity to the principles which pervade and uphold the moral universe. The living stream of truth is forever flowing, the heavenly light forever shines; but there must be a channel for the stream, an atmosphere for the refraction of the light. We are workers together with God in our own salvation and the salvation of others whom we can in any wise touch with any measure of influence.

The disciples waited together. It was a happy instinct that led them to do so. Had they separated, each one would have incurred greater danger of despondency, doubt, and possible apostasy. Their united faith made a current strong enough to bear them onward. Outside influence was excluded; no counter-current was met. They did what the Church should always do: they sunk all minor differences, waived all inferior and subordinate questions, while waiting for the fulfillment of the promise. They were ready because they had thus waited together in faith and hope.

The fulfillment of the promise came thus when they were ready; it could not come sooner. There they were, all with one accord in one place, prayer-

ful, expectant, attuned for the touch of God. The women were with them—"the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, with his brethren." Hark! there is a sound in the upper air strangely thrilling; it comes nearer and still nearer, filling all the house where they were sitting. Awe-struck, ecstatic, they catch the breath of power, when lo! another wonder: "There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." It was the baptism of fire. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This was the fulfillment of the promise. They were filled with the Holy Ghost, and under its touch they now thrilled with a touch never felt before. The power had come. The Pentecostal Dispensation was here!

The characteristic feature of this Pentecostal Dispensation is described in that one word—*power*. Power, power, power! It has come, and it has come to stay. What sort of power?

First, it is a power of *illumination*. Under the afflatus of the Pentecost Peter is no longer the same man he was before it came. Now he is illuminated, incandescent—the same steel, but now all aglow with internal fire. The hidden meanings

of the Old Testament Scriptures flash forth, recalled by the processes of memory under the touch of the Holy Spirit. The words of Jesus, recalled by the same power, become luminous as never before. The dead letter of the word is quickened into life; the Holy Ghost translates the truth of the gospel; prophecy is interpreted, its symbols assuming their proper significance; the facts of the gospel group themselves in right relation; its great fundamental principles stand forth in all their divine beauty and grandeur before the eyes that have been opened to see. The Pentecost is a fresh and perpetual revelation of Jesus Christ. Yea, it is a reincarnation of the Son of God in every believing heart. The Holy Spirit calls to remembrance the words of Jesus. He says to every believer what Jesus would say. The disciples now understood the promise that he would come to them again; he had, so to speak, turned himself into spirit, and poured himself into their souls. Now they saw the meaning of the remarkable words he had spoken unto them: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The Holy Spirit is the interpreter of the Word of God. The Spirit that dictated or inspired

the writing of it inspires also the reading of it. This pentecostal illumination still continues, and will continue until the end. The best defense against misinterpretation of holy Scripture is the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The backslider in heart readily becomes a backslider in his belief. The faithful disciple of Jesus who lives a life of prayer and follows him as a faithful doer of his word is impervious to the suggestions of Satan and the perversions of truth offered by the errorists who would take away the divinity of Christ and substitute empty forms and æsthetic dreamings for the blessed gospel of the Son of God in whom is the wisdom and power of the Godhead. The pentecostal baptism is the bulwark of the Church against false doctrines, heresies, and schisms. One genuine revival of Holy Ghost religion will do more to protect us and our children against the false doctrines that dilute and destroy their faith in the sublime and blessed verities of the gospel than libraries of polemical disputation or rivers of printer's ink poured out in newspaper controversy. The Spirit came to apply to us the redemption purchased for us. This teaching goes deep. It means that Christianity is the orderly development of God's plan of salvation, according to

which Jesus, the Apostle of our profession, must come to teach the truth in its completeness, and then the Holy Spirit is sent to apply the truth in all the varying experiences of the Christian life to the end of the world. "He shall take of mine, and show it unto you," said Jesus. The Holy Spirit makes no new disclosure of divine truth, but simply shows us the things of Jesus Christ. All that Christ taught the Spirit reteaches. And listen! All that Christ's bodily presence could do for an individual believer the Holy Spirit can do for every believer on earth. This may be overwhelming to our thought, but it is a blessed fact in Christian experience in these last days—the fact of the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit, everywhere at the same moment of time, and able to give every soul on earth a gracious touch whenever and wherever it may be needed. This truth fills the believing soul with a solemn joy, and fills this world with the glory of God.

Next this power is the power of the Comforter. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter. Jesus fulfills his promise to his sorrowing disciples: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst." And he fulfills to them that other promise: "I will not leave you comfort-

less: I will come to you." He is our Comforter in the present tense, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Standing by the coffins or the graves of our dead, we feel the power of the Pentecost; not only have we the testimony of the immediate disciples who were eyewitnesses of his resurrection, but the direct touch of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to feel and say: "We know Whom we have believed." We know, we know, we know! There is a resurrection of the dead. There is a meeting place for the parted. Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him, and we shall be forever with the Lord and with each other. There is no provision for doubt in this gospel of the resurrection to the believer who has felt this consciousness of the fulfillment of the promise of the Comforter. It soothes our heartache and saves us from heart-break in the presence of the tragedy and mystery of death. We have certainty here where we need it most, the conscious experience of the resurrection power of the Son of God.

The correlative of the power of illumination, of which something has already been said, is the power of *utterance*. The two go together. "What we have felt and seen with confidence we tell." Every recipient of the gracious power of the Holy

Ghost shall become also a dispenser of it. "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" is the promise. Every true believer is a witness for Christ, a witness that he hath power on earth to forgive sins. God is no respecter of persons; sons and daughters, servants and handmaidens, all flesh shall see the salvation of God, from the least unto the greatest. This power of utterance marked the first pentecostal revival, and has marked every genuine revival that has since blessed the world. Those Spirit-baptized disciples witnessed in Jerusalem and in Judea and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. And they are still at it. This endowment of power is a permanent endowment. Physical miracles may not be needed now; if they were needed, they would be given; God is limited in this regard only by his own holy will. The living Church is the standing miracle; a holy life is a stronger testimony than any other. The raising of a soul dead in sins into spiritual life is the miracle of all miracles. The physical miracles are not needed when we have that which was symbolized by the rushing wind and the tongues of fire—illumination, comfort, utterance. O breath of the Lord, breathe on all thy disciples to-day, that they may feel a fresh enduement of power and take a

fresh start as witnesses for Christ!—witnesses that he died and rose again; that he hath power on earth to forgive sins; that he hath conquered death and hell and is risen and reigns; witnesses that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; witnesses that his blood cleanseth from all sin in the present tense; that now is the day of salvation, salvation full and free. Yes, every recipient of this power must also be a dispenser of it. If we would not lose the tune, we must sing out our song. We quench the Spirit when we smother or silence the voice of testimony; we lose the gift of prophecy when we use it not. The old-time power will evoke the old-time testimony; the old-time joy will waken the old-time song of thanksgiving in our hearts.

In this dispensation of the Holy Ghost all thought, imagination, desire, and hope are brought under his influence. These are the last days when the Spirit is poured out upon all flesh, and whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved. These last days are the best days. The best things are in the future, not in the past; the culmination of the power and glory of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the distinction of this age. The time hastens when every house

shall be a temple, every heart an altar, every land a holy land, every man a priest unto God, all earth hallowed ground. Let us take a fresh start. Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, let us press forward. All the resources of the Godhead are at our command for the working out of our own salvation and for the evangelization of the world.

GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF
PERSONS.

(57)

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.” (Acts x. 34.)

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God Is No Respector of Persons.

THAT is to say, he is a just God, and in the long run gives every soul an equal chance.

Cornelius lived up to the light he had, and got more light.

Men and women who have the light of the gospel of Christ must live up to that light, if they would not have it withdrawn. They must walk in the light; this means that they must advance. They cannot stand still: they must go forward or backward.

Very many have very little light at the start. They are heavily handicapped by heredity and environment. The best possible for them here seems to be poor indeed. But the Lord lives and reigns. Eternity stretches out before every soul that must give account to God. That will suffice for unraveling all tangles, righting all wrongs, equalizing all allotments in the sphere of moral agency according to the principles of righteousness.

This is the long and the short of this whole matter. It opens a door of boundless hope to every soul that trusts and tries where he is and as he is.

Eternity will not be too long to praise God as

60 God Is No Respector of Persons.

we ought for our creation under such a law with the possibility of such a destiny.

The mystery of this scheme under which we live does not nullify the certainty of it. An epigrammatic sage has said that what we know of God now enables us to trust him for what we shall know hereafter. We get bewildered when we attempt a survey of the divine administration in the infinity and complexity of its parts. We are overwhelmed with the perception of the inequalities of human life and the awfulness of its ever-recurring tragedies that raise in our minds questions too vast for our comprehension and touch our hearts with a pathos too deep for human speech. But when we feel God's attuning touch, and listen to his voice, we can serenely, if not joyfully, say with Job, the Old Testament witness, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him;" and in the innermost depths of our souls realize in all the preciousness of their meaning the words of Peter, the New Testament confessor, that "God is no respector of persons." God is good: we believe it now, and will feel it forever.

THE GLORY OF THESE LAST DAYS.

(61)

“But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens will I pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. . . . And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Acts ii. 16-21.)

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The Glory of These Last Days.

EVERYTHING that God does is beautiful in its time. Every epoch of this world's history has had its special interest and attraction. To Adam and Eve the new world must have been fresh and sweet; they quaffed the cup of life in its first sparkle and mantling beauty, when unfallen man had direct communion with God, and talked with him in the garden in the cool of the evening. To have lived in the patriarchal age, when angelic beings walked the earth and conversed with men in human speech, and tabernacled in human homes; to have followed the standard of Moses in the miraculous journey from the land of bondage to the land of promise; to have stood with Isaiah on the Mount of Vision and gazed on the sublime panorama of the unfolding glories of Immanuel's kingdom; to have been a dweller on the earth when Jesus was here among men, witnessing the wonders he wrought, hearing the gracious words he spoke, realizing that in very truth God was manifest in the flesh—to have lived during any of these epochs in the history of the world would have been a blessed thing. But is it

not best of all to be living now, in these last days referred to in this text—that is, in the gospel dispensation inaugurated on the day of Pentecost? The distinction of these last days is that they bring the culmination of the power and glory of the gospel of the grace of God. These last days are the best days.

This is emphatically the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. There was glory in the former dispensations, but there is a greater glory in this. In the third chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul makes this affirmation, exulting in the superior glory of these last days, declaring that converted souls, born of the Spirit, are his credentials or letters of credit as an apostle—more convincing and more glorious than all the wonders of Sinai.

The universal diffusion of the Holy Spirit is the culmination of the wisdom and goodness of God in the present dispensation of the truth of the gospel of his grace. The prophecy is in these words: “And it shall come to pass afterwards [saith God], that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” This makes every house a temple, every heart an altar, every man a priest unto God, every land a holy land, all earth hallowed ground. Let

us not look upon the dim and fading past, but at the living and blessed present. and consider what reason we have to be thankful to God for having cast our lot in these last days.

There is now no monopoly of religious privilege. Former dispensations of truth and grace were necessarily restricted. In the order of divine providence a channel had to be provided that the stream of the water of life might flow into all the earth. God's disposition toward his creatures has never changed, cannot change. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Yet he acts according to law, and the free agency and moral accountability of man are recognized in all his dealings with the human race. Therefore he could impart no more light than there was capacity to receive, give no more grace than man was ready to accept. We cannot understand fully these principles of heavenly truth and grace, but we may rest assured that God is saving this world as rapidly as it can be done in conformity with the moral laws which pervade and uphold the moral universe. The living stream of truth is forever flowing; the heavenly light forever shines; but there must be a channel for the stream, an atmosphere for the refraction of the light.

The bewildered disciples, sorrowing over the approaching departure of Jesus, were comforted by the promise of the Spirit, even the Spirit of truth, that should abide with them forever. He told them that the outpouring of the Spirit was dependent upon his own ascension. Christ must ascend before the Holy Spirit can descend. These are his words: "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." These weighty words, says a strong theologian, declare that the sending of the Spirit was a part of Christ's royalty as Mediator, and that it was not convenient that the Spirit should be sent till Christ was crowned and set down on his throne in his kingdom; "then the Spirit was to apply to us the redemption purchased for us." The teaching goes deeper than that. It means that Christianity is the orderly evolution of God's plan of redemption according to which Jesus, the Apostle of our profession, must come to teach the truth in its completeness, and then the Holy Spirit is sent to apply that truth to the human soul in all the varying experiences of the Christian life to the end of the

world. "He shall take of mine, and show it unto you," said Jesus. The Holy Spirit shows us the things of Jesus Christ. All that Jesus taught the Holy Spirit reteaches. All that Christ's bodily presence could do for an individual believer the Holy Spirit can do for every believer on earth. This is one of the glories of these latter days. It is overwhelming to our thought, but is a blessed fact in Christian experience in these last days—the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit, everywhere at the same moment of time, and able to give every soul on earth a gracious touch whenever and wherever it may be needed. This truth fills this world with the glory of God, and floods the believing soul with a solemn and mighty joy whenever it is grasped by true faith in the present tense.

Another affirmation or suggestion of this passage is, that every recipient of the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit shall become also a dispenser of it. "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," is the promise. Every true believer is a witness for Christ—a witness that he hath power on earth to forgive sins. God is no respecter of persons: sons and daughters, servants and handmaidens, all flesh shall see the salvation of God, from the least unto the greatest. This character-

istic marked the first pentecostal revival, and every genuine revival that has since blessed the world. Prophesying includes not only the preaching of the gospel from the pulpit, but witnessing for Christ everywhere and at all times by word and deed. Thus the believer lets his light shine. The Holy Spirit finds a channel wherever there is a mind to think, a heart to feel, and a will to choose. Thus this Spirit is poured out upon all flesh, according to the promise.

Another suggestion of the text is, that the Holy Spirit is not capricious or arbitrary, does not work at random, but according to the laws of the human mind. "Young men shall see visions; old men shall dream dreams." Youth is the season when the imagination is most active. The Holy Spirit rouses and exalts this faculty when the light of life's morning rests upon the shining hills. Jacob's vision of the mysterious ladder ascending up into the starry depths of the skies and the ascending and descending angels came to him in his youth. In his old age the vision was not repeated, but in a dream of the night he was reminded of it; the memory of it still belonged to him, and at the touch of the Enchanter its inspiration came back to his soul. "I am the God of Bethel," said the

Lord to Jacob in his old age; that was enough. Again he was a young man, again he lay under the silent stars, again he heard the voice that then thrilled his soul—and his fears and doubts were gone. You have had your Bethels; I have had mine. Their blessing abides to this hour and will never be lost. The visions of youth are prophecies that shall find practical fulfillment for all who are true to the high and holy ideals that first ravish their souls under the touch of the Holy Spirit. Blessed are those elect souls that die young, leaving this world before the light fades from their sky, “whose eternal summer shall not fade.” Around the names of the holy dead who die young lingers the light of everlasting youth. Sad, sad indeed are they who live to be haunted by the ghosts of their dead ideals, whose youthful visions of the true and the beautiful have been lost in false living, and to whom old age has brought neither holiness nor peace. A withered, hopeless old age is the saddest sight in this sad world. God save us from such a fate! If we live to be old, let us hope that then the quiet mirror of our minds may still retain and reflect the images of heavenly truth and coming glory in the day dreams of our waiting spirits and in the dreams of the still night

when whispers are heard in the silence from the border land that divides the things that are seen and temporal from the things that are unseen and eternal. The teaching of the text is, that the active and soaring imagination of youth and the passive and placid receptivity of age are alike impressed and controlled by the Holy Spirit. All thought, imagination, aspiration, desire, and hope may be brought under the guidance of God in these last days when his Spirit is poured out in prophetic fullness and power, and whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Jesus Christ has turned himself into spirit and poured himself forth upon the world. There is a reincarnation of Jesus Christ in every believing soul on earth. Thus is fulfilled unto the Church his promise: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And thus is fulfilled his promise: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst." And thus again is fulfilled that precious promise to his sorrowing disciples: "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." That we have this Intercessor, this great High Priest, is the glory of these last days, when the Spirit is poured out upon all flesh, speaking the word Jesus would speak,

giving the touch that he would give. He is here not only in the benefits of his atonement for sin, but in the benefit of his office as Intercessor, our perpetual Advocate in heaven. He has all the requisite qualifications for this work—merit, wisdom, power, sympathy. We have him in the present benefits of his priesthood, a Sacrifice always upon the altar. His intercession is as real now as it was in the days of his fleshly sojourn with us when he poured out his prayers, his tears, and his blood for us. He is our Great High Priest in the present tense, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Therefore we will hold fast our profession. Do we want power? All power is given to him in heaven and earth, and none can pluck us out of his hand. Do we want wisdom? He is the wisdom of God, and our wisdom. Do we want sympathy? He was tempted in all points like as we are, and is therefore able to succor them that are tempted. Do we want a ready ear to hear our prayers? He fulfills his promise to be with his people always, even unto the end of the world. He can be with them all at once, hear them all, and redress the wants of all. Do we want infallibility? We find it in him, and nowhere else. Jesus Christ is the infallible Priest of every believing soul. We have

him, and we want no other. We will hold fast our profession. You remember to-day that profession, and the hour you made it—a profession of faith in Christ, a profession of love to his Person, of zeal for his cause, of devotion to his Church. Let us hold fast our profession.

OUR INFIRMITIES HELPED.

(73)

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Rom. viii. 26.)

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Our Infirmities Helped.

THIS is the very word we wanted to hear, though its meaning may not be quite clear to us. It is said by many teachers in Israel that the manner of the Spirit's help is inexplicable. The mind staggers under the weight of the mighty truths affirmed or suggested in this eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which might be called a Bible within a Bible.

The immediate reference here is to help in prayer. First of all as to our infirmities is ignorance of the nature of prayer. It is grounded upon the mediatorial office and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Other foundation can no man lay. He himself trod the path of prayer; both by precept and example he taught us how to pray while here in the flesh. The Holy Spirit, not limited by time or space, does for all his followers what Jesus did for those whom he touched while he walked among us as a man amongst men. He was in all points like as we are, sin excepted, and is therefore touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He is the infallible High Priest of every believing soul, and is able to save unto the uttermost all that come

unto God by him. Our infirmities that make us need help in prayer—what are they?

One of our infirmities is ignorance. Voluntary and blamable ignorance does not come under this head. Jesus said to his disciples: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." And again he said to them: "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." The Holy Spirit therefore cannot be expected to reveal Bible truth by direct inspiration to one who has willfully shut his eyes from seeing that truth. Indifference is a nonconductor of this heavenly influence. But that the Holy Spirit does quicken and guide the processes of memory in bringing to remembrance the truths revealed in the Bible is a belief of many, and an experience with not a few elect souls who have searched its pages with responsive souls. And it is no less true that the Holy Spirit helps to interpret, as well as to remember, the word of life. He does not in either case supersede effort on the part of the believer; he helps those who are striving to know and to do the will of God.

Another infirmity is doubt. Doubt is an insidious leaven; a little of it will spoil any prayer into which it enters. Faith takes hold of the promise of God; doubt loosens and breaks its grasp. Doubt sometimes comes in the garb of humility; the sense of unworthiness pressing upon the burdened soul so heavily that we forget for the time being that we are saved through grace, not by merit. But the Holy Spirit gives the soul the touch that reveals or revives the consciousness of the blessed fact that all the fitness Christ requireth is to feel our need of him. Sincerity is presupposed all along, at least such a measure of sincerity as clearly differentiates a struggling suppliant from a trifler or hypocrite.

Another infirmity is dullness. At times the spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak. To pray with the spirit and with the understanding also seems hard at times. It is a help just then to recall that word of the Lord in the Old Testament which has in it the tenderness and beauty of the New Testament spirit: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." The Spirit quickeneth by touches that will be recalled with grateful hearts by many

who out of their weakness have been made strong, and have been made to see light in his light.

Another infirmity is lack of utterance—which is expressly mentioned in the Scripture which furnishes the motto for this chapter. At times we feel more than we express to our own satisfaction in our prayers. This fact the saints have felt, and the poets have sung all along. A sense of need, an earnest longing for a blessing from the Lord, is felt, but no specific utterance shapes itself in the soul of the suppliant before the throne of grace. The attitude of the soul is this: Thou knowest my needs, O Lord, better than I know them myself. Bless me as I need; bless me now. The answer comes—comes to the preacher in the pulpit in the touch that leads him and helps him to lead the congregation to pray as they ought for what they need then and there. And the answer comes to the disciple in the place of secret prayer in a touch that opens all the channels of spiritual receptivity for the inflowing light and love of the Lord in the present tense. Under that touch we have desires and hopes too big for words; they take hold of God and eternity. These groanings, these yearnings of the soul for the best and the highest that God can give to his children, under the qualifying

grace and direction of the Holy Spirit, receive the answer that demonstrates that the will of God and the wants of his people are the same. It is no wonder, therefore, that the apostle said in this immediate connection: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." And so on to the end of that golden chapter that deals in certainties of ineffable preciousness to all who truly know the Lord—the certainty of sustaining grace here, the certainty of unending glory hereafter. They know that Christ is in heaven preparing a place for them, and that the Holy Spirit is here preparing them for the place. Faith stands leaning on His word of promise; the Holy Spirit gives the internal witness to their sonship, heirship, and coming glory.

In the spring of the year 1902 I expected to go to London as a delegate to the Methodist Ecumenical Conference then and there to be held. For special reasons I desired to make this which would have been my first visit to the Old World. I had looked forward to it with pleasant expectancy and with the hope of much benefit to both my soul and body. But difficulties intervened, and it became a question hard to settle as to whether I should attempt the voyage or abandon it alto-

gether. I made the matter a subject of prayer, but the *pros* and *cons* continued to be so evenly balanced that for a time I could not see my way clear in either direction. One night while on my knees in prayer this suggestion presented itself to my mind with great force: What you need is not a solution of the question as to whether you shall go to the Ecumenical Conference, but the grace of submission to the will of God, whatever it may be. So my prayer was: "Lord, help me to say: 'Thy will be done in this and all things.'" The answer and the blessing came. The touch I needed was given, and I humbly trust that from that hour the prayer that God's will may be done in me and by me has a new and more precious meaning to my soul.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

6

(81)

“But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth
songs in the night?” (Job xxxv. 10.)

(82)

Songs in the Night.

(SECOND MEDITATION.)

WE sing our own songs in the day time; the songs we sing in the night are given us by God. The word "night" means figuratively distress as here used; the song means the comfort God sends in his own wisest way. Goodness does not give exemption from distress in such a world as this; it comes to good men and women in many forms. These nights seem to be very dark and very long to some persons who find it hard to trust a God whose ways they cannot clearly trace. By the wisdom of the world they know not God, and from them he hides himself and to them utters no voice they can understand. But there are others who are more responsive to the voice of God that speaks through his providence to all who do not harden their hearts and close their ears. The untuned instrument responds to no touch of the musician. The night, in this sense, is songless to the thoughtless and the prayerless and the thankless.

Affliction brings darkness in the form of bodily sickness. The aggregate of distress of this sort in our world might make an archangel shudder, or

an archfiend feel pity. Children born with bodily weakness and pain as their lot from the start; strong men that become crippled and maimed, and never afterwards know a well day; delicate women that fight a hard battle with unrelenting pain all their lives; aged ones who more and more find their strength failing and their physical infirmities heavier and harder to bear—all these know what is meant by the night of bodily affliction. To some of these comes the song in the night. An inner voice speaks to them of a world of unbroken harmonies where the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick," and their believing souls sing a song of joy that fills the night with the melody of heaven.

Affliction brings darkness in the form of sorrow. It is but repeating a truism to say that capacity for sorrow measures rank in the scale of moral being. The highest often suffer most. Every one who has had real sorrow feels as did Jeremiah when he made the challenge: "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." The heart knoweth his own bitterness. The one sorrow that is hardest to bear may come suddenly or it may come slowly. "Anything but this, O God of mercy!" cries the smitten soul when the light of the eyes is taken away, the voice sweetest to hear si-

lenced, the heart upon which it leaned stilled in death. Then comes the night, with the gloom that no earthly voice can cheer. But listen: through the darkness floats down the resurrection song: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." This song in the night of sorrow thrills the trusting soul with the powers of the world to come, and the song breaks forth in the triumphant strain: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Most of all it is sin that brings darkness upon the soul. No one who has felt the pangs of real conviction for sin needs to be told that is so. The language of an Old Testament singer is strong: "The pains of hell gat hold upon me." The sinfulness of sin he had seen and felt: he found deliverance, and his song, the one hundred and sixteenth psalm, is a song of thanksgiving. His pain was turned into joy by the touch of God's mercy, and his grateful heart prompted the resolve to take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. The song that was given to him in that night of trouble is still sung in many lands, and its music makes glad many hearts that catch

its melody as they read and pray. The same new song was put into his mouth that was given to the author of the fortieth psalm, even praise unto our God. And the invariable result followed. Other souls felt the gracious touch, took up the song, and passed on the blessing.

Into most lives there come many seasons of affliction—nights of darkness—and to trusting souls are given again and again songs of deliverance. To some are given a special experience of this sort that stands out from the rest in their recollection—one song in the night which they remember with a joy that is deep and holy. One such recollection comes to me here. It is now more than forty years ago that I left my office in San Francisco about sunset and started homeward; but, going back for something forgotten by me, I found a young man whom I had left there bent above a table with his face in his hands sobbing bitterly. “What is your trouble?” I asked. “I can’t tell you,” he answered without lifting his head, his frame shuddering as he spoke. I did not intrude further upon his privacy, but left him bowed in the same position. After supper I could not keep him out of my mind; his image kept rising before me as I left him there wrestling with his trouble.

Yielding to an impulse that came upon me strongly, I put on my hat and sought him again. Climbing the staircase, I pushed open the door of the office, and there he sat with bowed head and face hidden just as I had left him. Our interview need not be recited in detail. I told him that I had no wish to invade the privacies of his life, or to intrude upon him my presence or my counsels; but that I had sought him in obedience to a sympathetic impulse that I could not repress, and had brought him a message from the all-pitying Christ, whose minister I was. He listened in silence, not lifting his head. "Shall we pray together?" I asked. He sank upon his knees, and I knelt by his side and offered the prayer that was in my heart for the burdened soul whose sorrow only One could know and heal. The answer came, and somehow when it touched my own heart I knew that it had also touched him. When we rose from our knees by the bright moonlight that streamed through the window into the room on his face was the serenity that showed that the peace of God had come into his soul. We pressed each other's hands and parted. As I climbed the Pine Street hill I had given me a song in the night that has to this hour strengthened my faith in the pitying

Christ and makes me feel as I pen these words (March 25, 1902) that I would be glad to sing out the song with my latest breath.

Sing out your song in the night. Let it be a song of thanksgiving—thanksgiving for truth revealed, thanksgiving for the touch that imparts conscious comfort in the present tense, thanksgiving for the promise of the unmixed blessedness and undimmed glory that will come when this mortal shall have put on immortality.

If you would not lose the tune, sing out your song in the night. The daybreak is not far off for you.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS INTER-
CESSOR.

(89)

“We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Rom. viii. 26.)

(90)

The Holy Spirit as Intercessor.

THE lesson in this twenty-sixth verse of the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is this: Absolute sincerity insures success in every approach we make to the throne of grace.

At times we are conscious of so many needs that we cannot tell where to begin. We cannot tell which is most urgent. Our minds are confused, and our faith lays hold of nothing in particular.

Then at other times, though we may have a definite sense of our needs, we cannot pray as we ought. The infirmities of the flesh weigh us down. Our thoughts wander. We cannot, it seems, command the conditions of successful prayer. And yet we try to pray—and that is a blessed thing. That is the one thing that puts us on the right path. The praying attitude of the soul is indispensable. Without this, any talk of prayer is idle; with it, the needy soul and the gracious God are brought into touch.

The declaration that the Spirit himself maketh intercession must mean—so I feel as I write the words—that he helps us to see our needs when we

tarry in the secret place and wait for his touch. God works in us to will and to do—so he tells us. In the place where we pray, above all other places, we would be readiest to receive the touch that would make known his will, and impart the willingness to do it.

But this Scripture goes deeper still. The Spirit maketh intercession for us literally, saying for us what we cannot say for ourselves, interpreting our wants to our merciful Heavenly Father, the prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. The Spirit sees clearly where our vision is dim. The Spirit speaks clearly where our language fails. The groanings that cannot be uttered by us the Spirit voices in the ear of God. A sense of need is the one condition of prevailing intercession. Joseph Hart sings the song which has found a response in innumerable souls:

Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him:
This he gives you;
'Tis the Spirit's glimm'ring beam.

There it is for you: A sense of need in your soul at one end of the chain, and the fullness of Him in whom all fullness dwells at the other—with no break in the connection.

PASS IT ON.

(93)

“ Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” (2 Cor. i. 3, 4.)

Pass It On.

THAT is the law of the Christian life. Every recipient of the grace of God becomes a dispenser of the same. Every soul that has received comfort in trouble is made a channel through which that comfort flows to other souls. Of course we are speaking of the comfort that comes from God, who is the Giver of all comfort that is true and abiding. He is the Father of all mercies, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. This none of us will deny. But do we feel it? If so, our souls will kindle into a flame of holy joy, and we will join in the grateful song of the apostle: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the God of all comfort." We know whom we have believed. "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." That is the way it works.

We can give only what we have received. We cannot give more than we have received. The comfort that comes to us in our tribulation is im-

parted for this very end. On any basis other than this comfort so-called is more or less perfunctory. It is child's play mostly. The pitying Christ knows our frames and remembers that we are dust. He is therefore a merciful High Priest in things pertaining to God. Through him we have access to the God of all comfort, the fountain whence flows that river of God that is full and free for whosoever will come and drink. He is able to comfort them which are in any trouble. That is a sweeping declaration. There are many sorts of trouble in this world. Good men and women are not exempt; all are partakers. Chastening is the badge of true discipleship, as the apostle says in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Read and ponder. Trouble comes in many ways, and there is comfort for all. Trouble comes to many in the form of bodily pain and weakness. The apostle Paul himself had his thorn in the flesh. He prayed for its removal; he did not get ease from his pain. He got what was better—comfort. He prayed three times for the removal of his thorn in the flesh; the answer came in the bestowment of a fuller measure of grace that caused the power of Christ to rest upon him as never before. His strength was made perfect in weakness. This is his testimony.

How many sufferers have been comforted by it will never be known until this mortal shall have put on immortality.

Trouble comes to many in the form of poverty. It is well enough for those who never knew what poverty is, to make light of it; but it is a real trouble in itself, with its privations, humiliations, and discomforts. Intelligent sympathy with this form of trouble is possible only to those who have known what it is to be poor. Our Lord Jesus Christ came down to this plane: though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that through his poverty we might be made rich. He had not where to lay his head. The knowledge of this fact brings him close to the poor and needy, and makes a channel for his grace to flow into human hearts, which in their turn make channels for that grace to flow on to comfort other hearts from age to age.

Trouble comes through loss of friends—not very often, I think, for true friendship is hard to be moved—but most persons of keen sensibilities who live long in this world have known something of this trouble. Ah, this is a trouble indeed! It brings a sense of loneliness to the soul. The Master drank of this cup, and the servant is not above

his Lord. The immediate touch of the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother reassures the wounded spirit, and thus disposes the troubled soul to hold on to him, and to comfort by undoubting testimony and sympathy warm from the heart of Christ other hearts that are hungry for the true friendship for which we were made and by which we are blessed.

Trouble comes to many in the form of doubt. The greatest and best of God's servants have had their seasons of doubt and consequent despondency. In such a mood David sang his songs in the minor key, and the apostle Paul feared that after all he might be a castaway. But they got the victory of faith; David sang his song of triumph, and Paul bore his testimony to the efficacy of the grace that abides and abounds. Multitudes who have had this same trouble from doubt have found the same comfort, and have joined in the song of victory, passing on to others the comfort wherewith they themselves have been comforted.

Trouble comes in the form of bereavement. Death has its sting and the grave its victory on the plane of nature as we find it in all lands and among all races of men. To the believing soul comfort comes through the indubitable proofs of

the fact of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit with our spirits that we have a risen and reigning Saviour. We feel what St. John felt when he said: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." We know that our Redeemer lives. What we thus feel and see we tell, comforting others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves have been comforted. Tuned for this touch, it came when we were ready for it; from us others will be tuned therefor in their turn.

The running stream refreshes the trees and the flowers. The stagnant pond breeds malaria and death. This law of the Christian life lies at the basis of the religious experience that is truest and deepest, and inspires the religious activity that is holiest and heartiest. Freely receive, freely give—that is the law of the Lord written on the renewed soul by the Holy Ghost. Obedience to this law will fill the earth with the glory of God and bring to the joys of heaven the great multitudes that no man can number out of every kindred, tongue, and tribe.

The fulfillment of the promise of grace now to help in time of need gives assurance that there will be no failure of the promise of the glory that

is to be revealed hereafter. We have now the earnest of the Spirit—that is, present grace is a pledge of future glory. “The indwelling of God the Holy Spirit is the common mark of all believers in Christ. It is the Shepherd’s mark of the flock of the Lord Jesus, distinguishing them from the rest of the world. It is the goldsmith’s stamp on the genuine sons of God, which separates them from the dross and mass of false professors. It is the King’s own seal on those who are his peculiar people, proving them to be his own property. It is the earnest which the Redeemer gives to his believing disciples, while they are in the body, as a pledge of the full redemption yet to come on the resurrection morning. This is the case of all believers. They all have the Spirit.” (Ryle.)

These words from an old divine may close this Meditation: “The Holy Ghost is always present in the word of the Scripture, and speaks in it equally and alike to the Church in all ages. He doth in it speak as immediately to us as if we were the first and only persons to whom he spake.”

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS TEACHER.

(101)

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John xiv. 26.)

(102)

The Holy Spirit as Teacher.

THIS is one of the deep things of God that are found in this fourteenth chapter of the Gospel by St. John. The personality of the Holy Spirit is affirmed beyond question. He "teaches," "reminds," "testifies," "comes," "convinces," "guides," "speaks," "hears," "prophesies"—expressions that can be applied only to a personal agent.

The Holy Spirit utilizes the processes of memory in the communication of heavenly truth and in the promotion of growth in grace. With regard to the apostles themselves his office was two-fold: first, to recall the very words of Jesus; secondly, to interpret their meaning truly. Nothing less could be expected of a revelation that was divine; nothing more could be desired as to its certitude and completeness. The Holy Spirit could as effectually guard against mistake in transcription of the truth as Jesus himself could guard against error in the original utterance of it. This has been the belief of the wisest and holiest in the past; it will be the consensus of the whole Church in the good time coming. "Lo, I am with you alway," said Jesus. He who reads this gospel under-

standingly, applying it as he reads, feels a mighty joy within his heart in the consciousness of the indwelling, ever-present Christ.

With no desire to be wise above what is written, nor to strain the meaning of this scripture, it seems to me that a wider scope may be given to it in its application to the whole Church in all ages. There is an inner register in every soul whereon is recorded all the deeds done in the body which are to be met and faced in the final judgment. That is the book of life which will then be opened. The memory keeps all it gets. There is a special satisfaction in the thought that every acquisition of heavenly knowledge is imperishable in a believing soul. Nothing is lost. The word of the Lord is quick and powerful, though it may lie for a season "like a slumbering germ in the mind," as Olshausen expresses it. Fanaticism and unbelief are equally to be avoided here. That excitable and weak-minded men and women do mistake their own dreams and vagaries for the teaching of the Lord, cannot be denied. That holy men and women who, in sweet humility and sincere trustfulness, look to the Lord for light and strength through his word do find what they thus seek, may be affirmed on the testimony of the great cloud of wit-

nesses who have walked by faith, from Enoch, who was translated without seeing death, to the lowliest living saint who walks by the same rule, making the Word of the Lord a light to his path and a lamp to his feet. We will not narrow the meaning of the words of Jesus: "Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." The same old, unchanging, ever-glorious truths of the gospel may be presented in new forms, aspects, and applications, with illustrations as new and various as are the conditions of the souls of men in this ever-changing world. The reverent student of the Word of God attunes himself to His touch in its interpretation to his mind and in its application to his life.

There was a Christian family in which each member in turn recited or read a passage from the Bible as the basis of the worship at evening prayer. On one occasion the expected quotation was not forthcoming because of forgetfulness on the part of the one whose turn had come that evening. The conversation of the family circle had been directed to the painful and critical sickness of a lovely girl in a near neighbor's family. The head of the family

thought of the twenty-third Psalm, whose verbiage was familiar to every member of the household. By request it was recited by one of the children, and was then made the basis of a prayer for the blessing of the Lord upon the fair young sufferer. The language of the Psalm as it was repeated by the leader in the prayer seemed to take on new meanings and a diviner sweetness, and from the youngest boy to the silver-haired grandfather who led the family devotions that night it might seem that that sacred song had been written for their use then and there. It is at least certain that the memorizing of it by them all had tuned each one for the heavenly touch it brought.

FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST.

(107)

“They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” (Acts ii. 4.)
(108)

Filled with the Holy Ghost.

THIS is not merely the record of a past wonder. It is the indication of the potency of the force that sustains the New Testament Church in all its history. It is also an object lesson and a pattern for the New Testament Church in all ages unto the end. These pentecostal wonders show the scale upon which the evangelization of the world might be carried forward by the New Testament Church filled with the Holy Ghost.

They were all filled with the Holy Ghost. They had all waited for the fulfillment of the promise from the gracious Lord, who is no respecter of persons. They were all in their places, and were attuned for the touch. They knew not what would be the mode of manifestation nor the resulting subjective experiences. They waited on the Lord and trusted him with all their hearts, and that was enough. The promise was fulfilled in his own best way and time. They were all filled. There were no absentees nor doubters, and so none failed to get the blessing.

The filling did not make them equal in capacity. Nor did it abolish temperamental differences. Di-

versities of gifts were to be imparted then and continued; but the same Spirit was to be always in all. They were all filled, but not one lost his or her individuality. The Holy Ghost works with, not against, constitutional characteristics and providential adaptations. He gives to native eloquence a heavenly unction. He gives the musician a sweeter and deeper tone, but I know of no case where this baptism literally made the dumb to speak or the deaf to hear, or gave tune to the tuneless.

As they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, it is certain there was then no room in their hearts for anything that was unholy. Filled is a large word; it means "filled." It means now just what it meant then. There was then no contention among the disciples as to who should be greatest in the kingdom of Christ; there was no room for that sort of thing in hearts that were really filled with the Holy Ghost. This was the crowning blessing of the New Testament dispensation. The recipients did not dispute about it. They called it the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced with joy unspeakable in the consciousness that it had come to them and filled them with its presence and power.

This blessing of the baptism of the Holy Ghost with which they were filled was not meant to be transient. Nor as to individuals was it necessarily permanent. Moral freedom and responsibility are never lost in this life here on earth. Probation ends only when life ends here. But neither is it a true view of this subject which assumes that, after having been filled with the Holy Ghost, it is necessary that the believer must go back to the beggarly elements of the world. There is gracious encouragement as well as faithful and solemn warning in the apostolic injunction: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." And when the heavenly voice says unto us, "Quench not the Spirit," it means that the holy flame may be so fed and guarded that it may be kept burning forever. Thus we see that that which is a solemn warning is also a gracious encouragement. Declension and falling may be possible on the one hand where there is carelessness or presumption. On the other hand steadfastness and watchfulness guarantee steadfastness and final victory.

"It is as if you saw a locomotive engine upon a railway, and it would not go; and they put up a driver, and they said: 'Now, that driver will just

do.' They try one and another. One proposes that such and such a wheel should be altered, but still it will not go. Some one then bursts in among those who are conversing, and says: 'No, friends; but the reason why it will not go is because there is no steam. You have no fire; you have no water in the boiler; that is why it will not go. There may be some faults about it, but it will go well enough with all these faults if you do but get the steam up.' But now people are saying: 'This must be altered, and that must be altered.' But it would go no better unless God the Spirit should come to bless us. That is the Church's great want; and until that want be supplied, we may reform and reform, and still be just the same. We want the Holy Spirit; and then, whatever faults there may be in our organization, they can never materially impede the progress of Christianity when once the Spirit of the Lord God is in our midst." (Spurgeon.)

THE TEMPORAL AND THE
ETERNAL.

8

(113)

“ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”
(2 Cor. iv. 17.)

(114)

The Temporal and the Eternal.

LIGHT afflictions indeed! Who calls them light? Surely not one of the scathed and crippled sufferers who know what real affliction is in this world of sin and pain and death. Sin, pain, death—they have made human history one long tragedy running on from age to age. Under the reign of sin the whole creation has groaned and travailed together in pain until now—this was a true saying when it was spoken by St. Paul, and it is true this day. These afflictions can be regarded as light in only one particular—in their duration. In the twelfth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews the holy apostle himself says, “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous,” and he knew whereof he affirmed. The optimistic touch follows in close connection in the declaration that “nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” The keynote of this song is in that word—afterwards. The philosophy of the utterance at the head of this chapter is in that word. The transient now, the eternal afterwards—he places them in contrast, and as he weighs them

his vision becomes clearer and his soul takes fire. He saw how it came to pass that the momentary afflictions worketh out the gracious, glorious results, the thought of which excited within his believing soul a joy too deep for words. The foundation of God standeth sure; not one jot or tittle of his word of promise can fall to the ground. This and that—look at them the one over against the other.

When he was sick, he thought of that land whose inhabitant shall not say, "I am sick," as seen in vision by Isaiah, and he quickened his pace for that far country where he should catch the breath of the eternal morning.

When he was in prison he thought of the promise that he should be forever with his Lord where he should enjoy the freedom of the universe through the sweep of the eternal years.

When he was misunderstood and falsely accused, he thought of the promise that he should reach the sphere where he would see face to face, and know even as he himself was known, and he caught a foretaste of the blessedness of the inheritance awaiting him with the saints in light.

When weak and weary with toil and travel and care, he thought of the promise that his body,

though sown in weakness, should be raised in power, knowing that if the earthly house of his tabernacle were dissolved, he had a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The transient weariness, toil, and care that he encountered were light in contrast with the power and felicity to which he was going.

When he realized the disabilities and dishonors of the flesh, he remembered that he was a child of God and a joint heir with Christ, and felt a mighty joy swell within him as he compared the sufferings of this present time with the glory which should be revealed in the redeemed who shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The touches that come thus through the things which are seen and temporal prepare the believer for the things that are unseen and eternal, all working together for them that love God.

The most unearthly man I ever saw was John Wesley Childs, of Virginia. He was a Methodist preacher far famed for sanctity of life, soundness of doctrine in the pulpit, and faithfulness as a pastor. His name was a synonym for spirituality. There was a strange power in the gospel as he preached it, a something in his presence that re-

buked frivolity and awed the thoughtless and profane into quietness and reverence. Early in his ministry this man of God lay for three days and nights unconscious, in a sort of trance, from which he emerged a changed man, subdued in manner, solemn and serene, walking softly all the days of his life. He saw and heard what he never would utter; he could never be induced to speak of this experience, similar to that related by St. Paul in the twelfth chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians. He had caught a foregleam of the great things over there, and he never lost the touch that came to him then.

The late Bishop H. N. McTyeire, one of the least effusive yet most thoughtful of men, on his deathbed said to his neighbor and friend, Judge Edward H. East: "If I could be raised up and permitted again to enter the pulpit, how I could preach about heaven! I have had a glimpse of the other side." With that glimpse came a touch that prepared that stalwart thinker for the unseen and eternal verities just ahead of him.

GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

(119)

“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed
unto the day of redemption.” (Eph. iv. 30.)

(120)

Grieving the Holy Spirit.

THE Holy Spirit is a Person. If we deny this, we are at sea. If we forget it, we lose our reckoning. The mystery and the comfort of this great fact of the gospel of Christ are equal. The blessed Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—are included in the Scripture which furnishes the motto for this chapter. The triunity of the Godhead is in the New Testament so emphasized that the denial of it by good men who have good sense and candor seems very strange.

Jesus weeping over Jerusalem was not more truly a Person than is the Holy Spirit grieving over the sins and perils of backsliding believers. In the days of his flesh how close the pitying Christ came to the hearts that ached and the bodies that were sick! Through all the days of the new dispensation that followed his departure how close comes that other promised Comforter that abides with us forever, and to every needy and receptive soul speaks the word Jesus would speak and gives the touch Jesus would give! This fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians summarizes the truth on this line: "There is one body, and one Spirit, . . . one

Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." "Here is the blessed Trinity: God over all as a Father, through all by the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us, and in all by the Holy Spirit"—as Dr. Adam Clarke puts it.

Of course all willful sin grieves the Holy Spirit. Persisted in, such sin at first dims and at last quenches the light of spiritual life. The grieving of the Holy Spirit is the beginning of spiritual death. Sensibility is the sign of life; the loss of it is death to the soul. Let us beware lest we mistake deadness for soundness.

Love is not forgetful. Neglect of God's Word is a sign of forgetfulness of him, and grieves the Holy Spirit. Neglect of prayer is a sign of forgetfulness of the prayer-hearing God, and grieves the Holy Spirit. Neglect of Christian fellowship is a sign of forgetfulness of Him after whom the whole family is named in heaven and earth. Like seeks like. Love of the brethren is an invariable sign of the new life of God in the soul. Neglect of these means of grace grieves the Holy Spirit, by whom the believer is led and kept from day to day. These are truisms to the average disciple of Christ who will see these pages. But they are as true as truth

itself, and as solemn as life and death are solemn.

The Holy Spirit is what the name implies—the *Holy Spirit*, a Person, remember. His presence is the proof of the new birth and the witness of adoption into the family of God. The reader will know the meaning of these New Testament expressions. A trifling, irreverent temper grieves this indwelling companion of the disciples of Christ, who was promised and sent by the Lord Jesus Christ to abide with them forever. As St. Paul puts it in Romans viii. 11, the Holy Spirit “dwelleth” in true believers. If you are a true follower of Christ, the Holy Spirit rises with you in the morning, goes with you through every moment of the day, and blesses your sleeping hours with his presence. Therefore let us “watch and be sober,” as the apostle exhorts the Thessalonians. All who name the name of Christ are thus exhorted to soberness of mind. The risible muscles are given to men as well as the lachrymal glands; it is therefore no more harmful to laugh than to cry. The religion of Christ is a cheerful religion. The joy of the Lord is the strength of the faithful. But this does not mean that a perpetual giggle is comely. It does not mean that ludicrous images are always to be

welcomed in connection with sacred things. It does not mean that coarse humor is suited to the pulpit. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, it is true, but not this sort of liberty surely. The sound of the rushing, mighty wind and the sight of the tongues of flame did not come to the disciples while they sat exchanging funny anecdotes or engaged in personal gossip seasoned with satire or ridicule. Good men forget and make sad work in this matter. An entire discourse has been poisoned by one such dead fly. The religious influence of many richly gifted men and women has been lost to the social circles they touched because of this taint and habit of undue levity. The Holy Spirit cannot dwell in such an atmosphere. The very countenance changes when the Holy Spirit is thus grieved and banished from the soul; the serene sanctity that sweetens and illumines the face of him in whom is this indwelling Spirit becomes dulled and darkened, so that it takes no special discernment of spirits to detect the change. The "seal" is broken, a life is marred, possibly a soul is lost.

At the great Student Volunteer Missionary Convention held in Toronto, Canada, in March, 1902, the enthusiasm, which was notable from the

start, reached a culminating point one day when some powerful addresses were delivered to the body by men notable for their fervor and eloquence. At the close of one of the most glowing periods made by one of the speakers a ripple of applause started, when J. R. Mott, a layman of mighty faith and deep spirituality, rose quickly from his seat, waved his hand for silence, and said: "Don't applaud; the Holy Spirit would be better pleased if we would have a few moments of silent prayer." The air of the place was freshly charged with divine power; the spiritual current of the meeting deepened visibly and consciously to the assembled thousands bent in silent prayer.

At a social banquet given to welcome a new minister in one of our Southern cities about a dozen guests were present, most of whom were preachers of the gospel. It was veritably a feast of good things, with a flow of kindly feeling and the sparkle of wit. The table talk at length ran mostly into the telling of humorous anecdotes, two or three of the clerical guests possessing unusual gifts in that line of things. The talk became lighter and still lighter, until it was felt by one of the guests that the atmosphere of the room was reaching a plane below that of a company of holy men who

above all desired the presence and blessing of the Master who adorned with his presence and first miracle the bridal feast in Cana of Galilee. So, taking advantage of a momentary break in the conversation, he said: "Brethren, let's take a vote among our company as to which is the finest hymn in the standard hymnology of all the different branches of the one Church of our Lord Jesus Christ." All gave immediate and hearty assent, and one by one they voted, each one for his favorite hymn, giving in most cases a word of criticism and quoting a stanza or two. The air of the room was quickly surcharged with a gracious influence felt by all; into the talk there came a new element. Before separating, the company knelt together in prayer, and felt the touch that made them one in Christ Jesus. The hymns had tuned their souls for the prayer; the prayer was a factor in the good work of the Lord that is preparing them through grace abiding for the fellowship of the saints in light.

GLORYING IN TRIBULATIONS.

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“ Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who
comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able
to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort
wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” (2 Cor.
i. 3, 4.)

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Glorying in Tribulations.

THE apostle endured hardness. In tribulations he gloried, and that was a very different thing. He knew what he was talking about, for his tribulations were continual and heavy.

The etymologists tell us that tribulation literally means "threshing." Taking it in this sense, St. Paul had his full share. He was a much-threshed and hard-threshed man. Five times he received on his bare back forty stripes save one at the hands of the Jews, who made no child's play of this exercise. The apostle's remembrance of these threshings seems to have been very vivid and exact; he knew just how many times he had been publicly whipped, and just the number of blows he received each time. He had other experiences that might come under this head. He knew the inside of many jails, and the jails of his day did not minister to a prisoner's comfort nor gratify his æsthetic taste. Their fare was not luxurious, their society was not select. Let him tell the story in his own words: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have

been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

His tribulations touched his sensibilities as well as his body. Like his Master, he was wounded in the house of his friends so called. His good was evil spoken of. He felt the pang that pierces a generous heart in the discovery that a trusted friend is unworthy of that sacred name. Having also the care of all the Churches, we may be sure that in the administration of discipline and adjustment of difficulties among so many who were weak and erring he was a vicarious sufferer, as all his true successors—successors in soundness of doctrine and singleness of spirit—have been. His tribulations on this line, glanced at in his appeal to his credentials as a true apostle, in contrast with false apostles who opposed and traduced him, were many and heavy. He had graduated in this school of the Master, baptized with his baptism and drinking of his cup.

And yet he gloried in tribulations because they gave him the touch that tuned him for the touch of God farther on as he made his way from grace to glory—"Knowing," as he says in the fifth chapter of Romans, "that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Thus it has worked with elect souls all along, including the Captain of our salvation, who in some true sense was made perfect through suffering.

There was in one of the great divisions of the Methodist Church in America a mighty preacher of the gospel, an Apollo in physical beauty, a Chrysostom in eloquence. His popularity knew no bounds, and his usefulness was just as great during many years. His name was a household word in thousands of homes, and his praises were celebrated far beyond the limits of his own denomination and section. Suddenly he was arrested in his brilliant and fruitful ministry by an affection of his throat. At first he was crippled and weakened, and then silenced and almost wholly disabled. God only knew the bitterness of this cup that was given his servant to drink. How he prayed and agonized

in secret is known only to Him who knoweth all things. But it was evident to all who came close enough to him to catch his spirit that he had gotten the victory of faith. His thorn in the flesh was not removed, but he found grace sufficient to turn the bitterness into sweetness. It was noticed by his brethren that a deeper serenity and greater spirituality marked his pale and wasted features; and his voice, weakened almost to a whisper, had a pathos in its tones too tender to be described on paper. The mighty preacher was thus tuned for the touch of God that gave to him the crowning blessing of his life; and when he died in holy peace and joyful hope none doubted that he was tuned for the touch that gives glory beyond the veil to the child of God who goes up to take his place with the white-robed hosts that came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

TRY THE SPIRITS.

(133)

“ Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John iv. 1.)

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Try the Spirits.

THIS is not an obsolete caution. False teachers have been doing their evil work from the start. They have been plausible, persistent, and poisonous all along. The more vital the touch, the more surely have they perverted it. The more precious the doctrine, the more skillfully have they counterfeited it. Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light—so we are truly told. The Master himself puts us on our guard: “False Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.” These are Christ’s own words. They are very significant. They embody a prophecy which has been signally fulfilled; the false prophets and false teachers have flourished during every generation that has followed. The intimation seems to be clear that it is not possible to deceive the elect. We are ready to give our grateful assent to this assertion on condition that we define the elect to be those who willingly obey the gospel—“whosoever will.” The truth, and the whole truth in this connection, is: First, that God works in them to will and to do; secondly, that they, not receiving

the grace of God in vain, work out their own salvation with a watchfulness and diligence proportioned to the magnitude of the interest involved and the weight of responsibility thus incurred.

There is no need that any sincere disciple of Christ should be deceived and ruined. The spirits may be tried and tested by the Word of God. If they speak not according to that Word, it is because there is no truth in them.

The Holy Scriptures are the only and infallible rule of faith and practice—as our Article of Religion affirms. Bring all the spirits to this touchstone. The aggregated company of false teachers is Antichrist. Differing as they do in many things, varying as they are in the measure of their absurdity and hurtfulness, they have one feature in common: denial of the divinity and Messiahship of our Lord Jesus Christ. It need not be argued here that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity—three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—is involved with that of the divinity of Christ. If human language has any meaning, that fact is affirmed in the Holy Scriptures—affirmed explicitly, repeatedly, solemnly, joyfully. That some calling themselves Christians have denied it is a fact equally surprising and grievous, as it seems to

me. But it is a blessed fact that the consensus of the Christian world through all the ages has been on the right side of this vital question. The great body of believers have put the name of Christ above every name in earth and heaven. And there it will remain.

There is also the test of experience by which we may try the spirits. There is certainty here for the sincere soul. God will be true to his promise: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." Yes, obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge, a knowledge that is satisfying. The Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirits that our Redeemer lives; that we have a risen Christ who hath power on earth to forgive sins; that he is a living Christ who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them; that he is the proper object of our supreme adoration and grateful affection. Taught by the word of truth, and touched by the Holy Spirit, the possessor of a true faith crowns Jesus Lord of all. This is the supreme test. This knowledge is certain. The experience is heaven begun below.

A heathen has said: "Complaisance, taking the word in its worst sense, signifies a habit of conform-

ing to the sentiments of others, and lending oneself to do whatever he may please without being restrained by a principle of integrity." A Christian writer says: "A humble believer passes through the deep mysteries of the Word safely, without plunging into any dangerous mistakes; whereas the sons of pride, that take reason for their guide, are drowned in many ruinous errors." And John Fletcher, our own John Fletcher, has said: "Fetishism is the child of false zeal and of superstition, the father of intolerance and of persecution."

Try the spirits. The touchstone is the Word of God.

IN THE SPIRIT ON THE LORD'S
DAY.

(139)

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”
(Rev. xxii. 17.)

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In the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

To some who will read these pages there is a heavenly poetry in the words: "In the Spirit on the Lord's day." They recall the holiest, sweetest moments of their lives. They remind them of the blessedness to which they are looking in the city of God.

The use we make of the Lord's day, the spirit in which we look to it and enter upon it, shows what we are and whither we are going.

The ideal Sabbath is unattainable now. Disabilities and limitations are unavoidable. This is not our rest in any absolute sense of the word. We have the rest of faith now; the rest that remains for us is the rest of glorification. The rest of faith has in it a foretaste of the rest beyond—the earnest of the inheritance—as the apostle describes it in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The essential elements of our felicity here and there are the same; the difference will be a difference of degree and environment. Up there we shall have the fullness of joy, with nothing to hurt or destroy. Truisms, do you say? Yes, true they are; but such truths as will give new joy to the new life forever. The kingdom

of heaven is within us; in its subjective elements it can be nowhere else, as it consists of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Therefore we must take it with us initially if we would enter into its full and final enjoyment.

In the early Church the Lord's day was consecrated to worship, almsgiving, and the Lord's Supper. To be in the Spirit on that day was to be tuned for those exercises. The special sense in which the expression is used to designate the ecstasy or trance of St. Paul when he did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body is the same as that vouchsafed to other apostles and prophets when the outer world is shut out, and the inner and higher life or spirit is taken full possession of by our God. Whether this special and most exalted mode of the manifestation of God's power is to be expected now, will not be discussed here, further than to say: This is preëminently the dispensation of the Spirit, and God is limited only in the modes and measure of his manifestation by his own good pleasure. The miraculous element in such a manifestation weighs nothing against its possibility. The conviction of a sinner, the conversion of a penitent, the growth in grace of a believer, is a greater miracle than the stilling of the

tempest or the multiplying of the loaves and fishes. The spiritual miracles of this dispensation are the normal manifestation of God's saving power through the agencies of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To be in the Spirit on the Lord's day means, as already intimated, to be in the spirit of worship. To worship God is the highest action of a human soul. Real worship is meant here, of course. The apostle John states this solemn truth in his own weighty words: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." What does it mean to you—this saying, that God is a Spirit? To many it means nothing. That which hath neither body nor parts is nothing to the mind of a materialist. That which can neither be seen nor felt is to such merely a name or an abstraction. There must be spiritual consciousness, perception, and insight in order to get the meaning of this sublime declaration that God is a Spirit. Negatively, God, who is a Spirit, has none of the limitations of matter. Time and space are nothing to him. He inhabiteth eternity: past, present, and future are to him the same. He is everywhere present at the same moment: take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth,

and he is there; the heaven of heavens cannot contain him. Positively, God, who is a Spirit, is possessed of unlimited power. This power is partially discerned in the forces of nature. The material universe is but his vesture: he covers himself with light as with a garment, and stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain. The tremendous forces of nature, which are more and more revealed in our day of scientific marvels, speak to us of the mighty God who maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire, who hath his way in the whirlwind. In the physical universe in its immensity, and in the phenomena of nature, parts of his ways are disclosed, but the thunder of his power who can understand? To the question propounded by the man of Uz away back in the dim ages of the past we can give no answer other than that given by him when he bowed in adoration before the Infinite Spirit and waited for the fuller disclosures promised in the life to come.

God as a Spirit, omnipresent, omniscient, eternal, is a conception too mighty to be grasped. But these attributes, even imperfectly apprehended, furnish the foundation for the faith and worship that fills this earthly life with blessedness and begets within us the hope of future glory that fills

the measure of our aspirations. As revealed in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, this God whom we worship is a God of love as well as of wisdom and power. Jesus was God manifest in the flesh. On the Lord's day the disciples met in his name. They remembered his promise: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And also that promise of our Lord: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The fulfillment of these promises has made the house of God the gate of heaven to worshiping assemblies from age to age, has endowed the pulpit with heavenly unction, and made the songs of the sanctuary channels for the down-pouring streams of that river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. If you are in the Spirit on the Lord's day, you will be glad to worship him with a loving heart, whether it be in the great congregations or in the little companies where the promise of their Lord's presence is pleaded and fulfilled, or in the secret place where the worshiping soul meets the prayer-answering God. Wherever there is a worshiping soul there is a present Christ.

To be in the Spirit on the Lord's day means to make it a day for almsgiving and deeds of mercy

and kindness of every sort. That was the interpretation and practice of the early Church. The number of souls that have been helped and cheered by such ministrations will never be known this side of that world where human lives are reviewed and rewarded according to their works. The disciple meets his Lord on every errand of this sort. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, . . . ye did it unto me," he says. To be in the Spirit on the Lord's day, going on his errands, with his companionship, puts a divine element into these human experiences now, and makes memories that will sweeten the very joys of heaven. It is love's labor, and love makes it easy when one is in the Spirit. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Money, prayer, food, and raiment, and above all the pitying love of Jesus—give as you can now, and thus impart to your earthly Sabbaths a foretaste of the joys and foregleams of the glory everlasting.

Being in the Spirit on the Lord's day prepared the early Christians for celebrating the Supper of the Lord. It was a weekly memorial of his passion, death, resurrection, and second coming. It was to them a sacrament unspeakably solemn, tender, joyful. So it has been to believers all along,

and so it should be to us who, following their footsteps, hope to be ready for his coming and participate with them in the blessedness that is promised to the faithful. The touches of grace at the Lord's table tune us for the glory that is to be then revealed.

Many incidents illustrating the topic of this meditation pass before my mind, but they all give place to the recollection of that Lord's day so long, long ago when I stood before the chancel of the church and took the vows of discipleship, and then knelt and partook of the emblems of his broken body and shed blood. The peace that follows the pardon of sin, the sense of a mighty love, and the joy of a mighty hope were in my soul. That peace, that love, and that joy are with me now.

Quaint old George Herbert says: "On Sunday heaven's gates stand open." A mighty preacher of a later day has said: "Through the week we go down into the valleys of care and shadow. Our Sabbaths should be hills of light and joy in God's presence; and so, as time rolls by, we shall go on from mountain top to mountain top, till at last we catch the glory of the gate, and enter in to go no more out forever."

"'In the Spirit'—a state of ecstasy; the outer

world being shut out and the inner or higher life or spirit being taken full possession of by God's Spirit, so that an immediate connection with the invisible world is established. While the prophet 'speaks' in the Spirit, the apocalyptic seer *is in* the Spirit in his whole person. The Spirit only (that which connects us with God and the invisible world) is active, or rather recipient, in the apocalyptic state. With Christ his being 'in the Spirit' was not the exception, but his continual state." (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown.)

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!

All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and
sky and sea.

Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

BLESSEDNESS OF BEING LED BY
THE SPIRIT

(149)

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons
of God.” (Rom. viii. 14.)

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Blessedness of Being Led by the Spirit.

THE third Person in the Godhead is called the Holy Spirit because of his essential holiness, and because it is his peculiar work to sanctify the people of God. He is called *the* Spirit, by way of eminence, as the immediate Author of spiritual life in the hearts of Christians. Distinct personal attributes and acts are ascribed to the Holy Spirit: He speaks; he teaches; he reproveth; he makes intercession for the saints, and helps their infirmities. He is grieved; apostles are set apart by him to the work of the ministry, and he appoints them to that work. "He searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." One office of this Personal Agent, the Holy Spirit, is that of a leader.

The Holy Spirit leads to repentance. He reproveth the sinner of sin, of righteousness, and judgment to come. He is an enlightener; he shines into the soul, revealing to the sinner his true character and condition in the sight of God. He shines upon the Word of God, and brings the truth to light, revealing the holiness of the divine law, which is a transcript of the holiness of the divine

nature. He leads the sinner from the darkness of ignorance into the light of truth.

The Holy Spirit leads to repentance. The sinfulness of the sinner's heart is revealed to him as he looks within, and he not only knows, but feels himself to be a sinner unworthy of the favor of God. The Holy Spirit has searched him and tried him, has discovered to him the plague of his own heart, and he realizes the sinfulness of sin. David, describing his penitential pangs, says: "The pains of hell gat hold upon me"—and literally it was so. The remorse, the shame, the anguish of the awakened sinner proceed from the same cause that will make hell—a sinful nature and an awakened conscience. As surely as the Christian has in this world a foretaste of heaven, so surely has the sinner a foretaste of hell. The unholy may doubt whether there is a hell for them to go to when they die, but many of them cannot doubt that they will carry a hell with them into the future life, if there is such a life. Conscience is God's police officer in the soul, and a man can no more escape it than he can escape from himself. The Holy Spirit makes the guilty sinner a penitent sinner.

The Holy Spirit leads to pardon. The pardon of sin is purely a doctrine of the Christian revela-

tion, unknown to the heathen world, and as taught in the Word of God is beyond the reach of human invention. The Holy Spirit leads the penitent sinner to see his guilt, to feel his need of a Saviour; and then, under his further guidance, the contrite sinner is led to Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He is led to see the suitableness of such a Saviour to meet his need, to understand and by faith apply the promises of the Bible to his own soul, and is enabled by the help of the Holy Spirit to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as the full and sufficient atonement, oblation, and satisfaction for his sins. That is to say, he is justified by faith, and this faith by which he is justified is the gift of God by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit leads to the sanctification of the believer. "Leads" is the word from first to last. He does not drag nor drive. This is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit. He works in us to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, which is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." This might pass for a definition of sanctification. These graces live and grow in all who are led by the Spirit. The apostle Paul, in the eleventh verse of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, summarizes the whole truth in this

connection in the words: "Ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." All who are born of the Spirit are led and guided by him through every stage of experience in the Christian life, from the moment the sinner turns from the ways of sin, and passes through the strait gate of repentance, until he enters upon his final inheritance among the sanctified millions in the life everlasting. In all this gracious work of the Holy Ghost one touch tunes the soul for another from the conviction of the sinner to the coronation of the saint in glory.

The sons of God—what overwhelming condescension and love does such a relation imply! To be a servant of God would be a privilege, to be the friend of God would be a distinguished honor; but to be a son of God—what matchless love is here! The significance of this designation claims a word.

Believers are the children of God by regeneration. They are born of the Spirit, born from above, and thus renewed in the divine image.

Believers are the children of God by adoption. The apostle Paul, in the fifteenth and sixteenth verses of the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, says: "Ye have not received the spirit of

bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Among the Greeks and Romans the adoption of male children was a common custom. Adoption signifies the placing as a son of one who is not so by birth and conferring on him the rights, privileges, and inheritance that belong to children. This illustrates the change of relation that takes place when a sinner, led by the Spirit, returns to God. God becomes in a new and particular sense his Father. He can approach God with confidence and filial love. For "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." God is our Father; and while he watches over us with a Father's love, and extends to us a Father's protection, he, for our good, imposes the restraints dictated by paternal wisdom, and administers the chastisement needed. The chastisements of earthly parents are not always dispensed with good judgment and justice, and therefore they sometimes do harm instead of good. But the chastisements of our Heavenly Father are always for our good. The apostle Paul thus states this truth in the twelfth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews: "We have had fathers of

our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." It is a gracious paradox that there is comfort in knowing that our Heavenly Father afflicts with power; this gives the assurance that the chastisement will not be in vain. He can continue it until the object is accomplished. He chastens with wisdom and in love; he knows when and how to afflict. He will stop at the right time. No unnecessary pain will be inflicted, and the chastisement will not be continued a moment longer than is necessary. Hence we can adopt the language of the apostle Paul in the fourth chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Christians may be thankful for afflictions; they may glory in tribulations.

The Holy Spirit leads believers to the realiza-

tion of that blessed experience described by the apostle in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." The words deserve to be printed in golden letters. You could never doubt the love of your mother, though her eye may sometimes have looked upon you reprovingly, and her gentle hand may have held the rod of correction. Her love was a felt reality; the certainty of it neither absence nor the lapse of rolling years could destroy or diminish. So the believer knows that he is a child of God. The love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit. And he feels a mighty joy in the assurance that nothing can separate him from that love.

The Holy Spirit is an infallible Guide. He sometimes leads us by a way that we know not; but he knows, and will lead us aright. We walk by faith, not by sight. There are occasions in the lives of all when the need of such a Guide is felt—times when those that have no other support than that which nature gives will sink into despondency or despair. But he that is led by the Holy Spirit will at such times cling the more closely to the Rock; he may for a season walk in darkness, but not in doubt or dread.

Holiness is the evidence of adoption. Obedi-

ence is the test of sonship. Where the Holy Spirit guides, he also governs. A commander that leads an army directs all its movements. The Holy Spirit is a leader and commander to the people of God.

The Holy Spirit uses no compulsion. He leads only those who are willing to be led. He drags no unwilling soul to heaven. You can refuse to be led. You can repel this Friend who is ready to lead you to eternal life. Your freedom measures your responsibility, and it gives an element of blessedness that will enhance the riches of your inheritance as a child of God and heir of heaven to know that you voluntarily chose that better part, and that your love for him is not the love of a slave, but of a child.

The leading of the Holy Spirit that begins with the touch of true penitence ends with holy freedom and holy delight never to end.

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST.

(159)

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.” (Heb. iv. 14.)

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Our Great High Priest.

A PRIEST and a prophet are necessary to every system of religion—a priest, that the functions of public worship may be performed; a prophet, that the will of God may be declared. Under the Old Testament dispensation Moses was the prophet, and Aaron the priest. The prophets succeeded Moses, and Aaron was succeeded by his sons. Under this New Testament dispensation Jesus is both Prophet and Priest.

A priest is a mediator between God and man. This is specially true of the high priest. The Levitical priesthood was typical. The Antitype has come, Jesus the Son of God. His priesthood is the subject of a large part of this Epistle to the Hebrews, the object of which was to confirm the Hebrew believers in their devotion to Christianity. The apostle's argument is, that the new dispensation is superior to the old, and that it would be folly and madness in the Jewish converts to go back to the dead forms of an obsolete system, as they were tempted to do. Perhaps some of them did go back, for dead forms become very attractive to backslidden believers. "Come back

to the Old Church; you have no tabernacle, no temple, no high priest, no sacrifice for sin," said their Judaizing tempters. Paul's answer was substantially this: "No, we will not go back, for we have Jesus. We will not give up a present tense gospel and a living Christ, Jesus the Son of God." What Paul said then we can say now: We have Jesus, the Son of God, a divine Christ, the Lord of men and angels—God manifest in the flesh. If he were other than this, or less than this, he could not have been our great High Priest. No created being could make atonement for sin; the Mediator for sinners must himself be sinless. The sacrifice of Jesus once offered is sufficient. We have him as our sacrifice for sin.

We have Jesus as our perpetual Advocate, our Intercessor. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." We can never know in this life how much we owe to the intercession of Jesus Christ. While we pray he prays. While his disciples toiled in rowing that dark and stormy night on the Sea of Galilee, he was praying for them on the mountain; and in the fourth watch of the night he came to them walking upon the sea. So it is now with his Church and with each and every individual follower: he

may seem to delay, and sometimes the night seems to be very long and the toil very hard; but he comes at last, walking, if need be, over a sea of troubles, to rescue his people and to save his Church.

We have Jesus in the present tense in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a wonderful truth that there is a reincarnation of the Son of God in every believing soul. "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world," is his promise made to his disciples just before his ascension. It is as one has said, "as if he had turned himself into spirit and poured himself upon the world." In bodily presence he was limited by the laws of matter in the human nature which he assumed. His spiritual presence is not limited by natural law. In a way that we may not fully comprehend at the Pentecost the Spirit was poured out in such a way that it is as if Jesus in person were present in bodily form, touching all needy and responsive souls all over the world at the same instant.

Having such a great High Priest, let us hold fast our profession. What was that profession?

1. It was a profession of faith in Jesus as our Saviour.
2. It was a profession of love to his person.

3. It was a profession of zeal for his cause.

4. It was a profession of devotion to his Church.

Jesus is the Head of the Church, and rules this world and all worlds in its interest. The Church is his chosen agency for the conversion of the world. The Church is adequate to this lofty and blessed mission. The gospel of Christ shall be preached to all nations; the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ; every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess to the glory of God the Father. I speak of *the* Church, but do I mean only those of my own denomination? No; in the deepest and most sacred sense of the word every person who has a true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a member of the Church. In this fullest sense of the word there is only one Church. The Scriptures speak of the Church—not the Churches—of Christ. To discredit the Church is to discredit Jesus, the Head of the Church. The unity of the Church is promised in the Word of God, and it will come. The trend now is in that direction. First freedom, then unity—that is the order.

THE CHURCH'S LATTER-DAY
GLORY.

(165)

“ Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. . . . The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place I will give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.” (Haggai ii. 6-9.)

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The Church's Latter-Day Glory.

HAGGAI, the tenth in order of the minor prophets, was first of the three raised up to declare the will of God after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity. The Jews having for fourteen years discontinued the rebuilding of the temple, Haggai was commissioned to encourage them in their work. The stricken, sorrowful, and doubting Israelites were told: "Be strong . . . for I am with you . . . according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. For thus saith the Lord of hosts; yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. . . . The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."

The world was already in travail for the birth of the Son of God. There was universal expectation of a Messiah. God was preparing the world for

the coming of Christ. He was at the same time preparing the Church for its work. God always runs these lines of preparation parallel to each other. There was a mighty shaking of the nations preparatory to the advent of Jesus Christ. The Persian monarchy was overthrown by Alexander within two centuries after this prediction; Alexander's kingdom was overthrown by the Romans; and many other great revolutions took place preparatory to the one great and final religious revolution, which was consummated in a little more than five hundred years from the second year of Darius—a short period compared with the period that elapsed from the creation to the giving of the law; or from the giving of the law till the coming of the Messiah's kingdom. Jewish religion, Greek culture, and Roman power all contributed to this preparation. The perfect Greek language was being prepared as the vehicle for New Testament thought, and the great Roman power was being consolidated, in which the whole world was bound together to receive the impress of Christianity. Sinai quaked when God gave the law; the whole earth was shaken to prepare for the coming of the Messiah—of which this text furnishes a grand prediction.

The key to this prophecy is in its duality. This twofold character of the prophecies of the Old Testament is a feature the remembrance of which gives us the solution of this passage. In this duality of Old Testament prophecy we see the wisdom and goodness of God. The fulfillment of that part of a prophecy which is near at hand encourages the faith of believers and furnishes indubitable evidence that all the unfulfilled prophecies of the Bible will also be accomplished. Let us thank God for this "sure word of prophecy." Unto us the ends of the world have come. As the human race hastens on to the goal of its earthly destiny, prophecy after prophecy is fulfilled, God becomes more and more manifest in history, his wise purposes more and more apparent to the observing eye of the true believer; and thus faith grows stronger and hope brightens as we near the coming of the end.

And so it is that this prophetic utterance of Haggai, in God's own wisdom, accomplishes its double purpose: strengthening the hands of Zerubbabel and his collaborators to rebuild the fallen temple at Jerusalem, and strengthening our hands as workmen in building the Church of Christ which is the New Jerusalem descending out of heaven

from God. It was intended for this very purpose just as truly as if Haggai had uttered these words solely to give a text for this Meditation. To Zerubbabel and his fellow-laborers it said: "Though you have been punished for your sins, yet you are not forsaken by the God of your fathers; my Spirit is still with you; fear not. Cast not despairing glances backward upon the past glories of Israel, but look forward to the future. All the resources of the universe are in the hands of your God; the silver and the gold are his; Judah's conquered banner will again be unfurled by her sons, and the sun of her destiny that set in tears and shame shall again rise in triumph and glory." The more immediate fulfillment of this prophecy may be found in the rebuilding of the temple with a splendor in some respects, according to Josephus, exceeding that of Solomon; in the glorious war for independence under the Maccabees; in the advent of the Messiah, who actually stood and taught in the second temple, and whose Godhead and glory were revealed in the earthquake shock rending its veil at the crucifixion.

But what does this prophecy say to us now?

1. It reminds us that God is building a spiritual temple more glorious than any building made with

hands—a building made of living stones hewn by our Christ from the quarries of a redeemed humanity. I once saw this temple in a dream. It stood in the center of an open court, and rose story on story, story on story until its summit was almost lost in the skies. Language fails to describe its beauty and grandeur—its lofty columns, its tasteful capitals, its graceful arches, its swelling proportions, all blending into one harmonious and glorious whole, bathed in sunlight and canopied by the high blue heavens. And I saw the workmen at their work building this temple, which seemed to be near its completion, and as I looked I rejoiced in the contemplation of its almost perfected beauty and glory. But, behold! what horrid scene is this? Many of the workmen have ceased their labor and are engaged in fearful strife with one another. Clinched in deadly embrace, they tear each other like wild beasts, swaying, struggling, writhing, the blood streaming from their bodies, while ever and anon the frenzied combatants, still fighting, drag one another off the edge of the roof and fall headlong from the dizzy height and are crushed in mangled masses below. And I saw in my dream that some of the workmen went on with their work, not even pausing to no-

tice the combatants, quietly replacing the timbers that were displaced. And I noticed in my dream that nobody seemed to harm these workmen who kept at their work. And it gladdened me in my dream to perceive that they were making progress, and that the building would soon be completed. My dream was interpreted to me. The temple was the Church of Christ. The workmen who stopped to fight one another are the professed followers of Jesus who turn aside to engage in persecutions and denominational quarrels, pulling down, mangling, and destroying each other instead of building up the Church of God. It was shown to me that, nevertheless, the work would go on; that God would fight the battles of all who would work faithfully in his cause; that the end is not far off when this glorious spiritual temple shall be finished, and the headstone thereof shall be brought forth with shoutings, crying, "Grace, grace unto it." It was shown to me that the time was near at hand when the watchmen upon Zion's walls would see eye to eye, when needless strifes would cease, the practical unity of the Church be realized, and the millennial glory dawn.

2. This prophecy says to us that God will shake all nations preparatory to the coming again of the

Desire of all nations. God is shaking the nations now. We hear of wars and rumors of wars, famine, earthquake and pestilence, political convulsions, revolutions, social upheavals, hell vomiting up its legions for the last struggle with truth—its communism, its free love, its atheism, its Mormonism, its galvanized paganism, its counterfeit Christianity. Is not the world again in travail for the birth of some great event? Yes; the nations are waiting for the coming kingdom of Jesus Christ. China waits with her hundreds of millions for the rising of the Sun of Righteousness upon the darkness that has brooded over her suffering and sinful people. Ethiopia, still stretching out her hands to God, is waiting for her Deliverer, who will come and will not tarry. Italy, throwing off the yoke of ecclesiastical despotism, waits the coming of the one only Head of the Church, whose light and easy yoke she will soon welcome, and whose banner of peace will wave over her sunny plains and olive-crowned hills. Spain, the paralyzed giant, waits the touch that will rouse her to new life and start her on a career marked by a glory greater and purer than when her victorious banner floated in the breezes of every sea and her soldiers carried her conquests into every clime. Russia, stirring with

new thought and thrilling with new life in all her mighty mass, waits the coming of Him whose truth is always the harbinger alike of civil freedom and spiritual emancipation. France, scarcely yet recovered from the delirium of her last atheistic drunkenness, staggering, blindly groping in the dark, waits the coming of Christ in the power of a genuine and accepted gospel that will more than fulfill the hopes of her enthusiasts, the dreams of her poets, bringing in that "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" which is the fruit not of unbelief and social theorizing, but of that love which tasted death for every man. Great Britain, oscillating between a relapse into obsolete forms and scientific materialism, waits the coming of the Lord in a baptism of his Spirit that will check the ebbing of the Wesleyan movement and give it a new tidal sweep that will carry it onward until it breaks in glory upon the millennial shore. In America, the United States, seething in the vortex of conflicting ideas, right and wrong grappling in fierce conflict, every form of error rampant and every salient point in the camp of truth guarded by brave defenders; Mexico throwing off the leaden weight of its corrupted Christianity; Brazil catching the restless spirit of the age, and bending her ear to catch the

awakening voice of God—all are waiting for the Desire of all nations, for the coming of the Lord in the fullness of the latter-day power and glory.

3. This prophecy tells us substantially that there is always as much of the Spirit of God in the world as there is receptivity among men. The Jews, in their decline and fall, had lost faith in the divine presence and favor; they seemed to think that God's mercy was "clean gone forever," he having withdrawn himself from them and left them to darkness and destruction. This was only true in this sense: that their unbelief and disobedience had closed the channels through which the grace of God could flow into their souls. There was no change in God; as a Sun, the beams of his truth shone with undiminished effulgence; as the Fountain of life, the ocean of his love was as deep and as wide as ever. But here was the trouble: the people were turned away from God, and there was lack of true hearts to reflect that light; the hearts of the people were closed against his grace, and there was no channel into which it could flow. Do you not perceive this law by which the measure of God's grace manifested in the world is the measure of human receptivity? All that his grace needs is a channel in which to flow. A revival of religion

is the opening of the channels by the turning of men's wills to God. Solomon thought—inspiring thought!—the conditions of salvation are within our own power. And this is the ground of our hope for the latter-day glory; more and deeper channels are being made for the grace of God to pour into the thought, the feeling, the hope, the activities of the world. The printing press, steam power, the electric telegraph, enlarging the boundaries of human thought, multiplying the number of thinkers, quickening all movement on the earth—it all means not that these agencies shall be employed in the service of the evil one, but that into them all, as channels opened, God's truth and grace shall soon pour in a flood which will baptize all nations and fill the earth with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea.

4. This prophecy tells us that the glory of Christianity is not in the record of its past wonders, but in its present power and coming triumphs. If we look back with joy, we look forward with hope. If there is a glorious record behind, there is a more glorious future ahead. Christianity is the Church of the *living* God. I love to read of the wondrous works of God as recorded in the Bible, but the most wonderful of all the chapters in the history

of redemption are those that contain the prophecies of the coming glory of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are now writing new chapters of this history. We should be ashamed of our dullness and want of faith when we consider the prophecies and promises of the word of God concerning the power of the gospel and the certainty of its triumph. We have the very gospel the world needs, the very gospel which is to be preached to all nations, the gospel which offers salvation to all men on the simple condition of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a gospel without limitations, a gospel without the red tape and circumlocution of formulated creeds and close ecclesiastical corporations, a gospel of inner life and power instead of mere letter and form, the gospel which offers a present salvation in the name of the risen Redeemer, a gospel that holds there is salvation for the whole world. This gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. O Son of God, reveal thy saving power to him who reads!

We talk of Palestine as the Holy Land, and make pilgrimages to the spots hallowed by the footsteps of Jesus and the miracles of the New

Testament. This is our Holy Land. Here where the greatest of all miracles has been wrought in our conversion; here where the Saviour's presence is seen in works more glorious and blessings more precious than all the wonders wrought by him in the days of his flesh; here where our dear departed ones sleep in Jesus and in hope; here where we have seen the grace of God in blessed baptisms of the Spirit of God; here, here is our Holy Land!

THE TEST.

(179)

“ O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man
that trusteth in him.” (Ps. xxxiv. 8.)

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The Test.

No good man ever enjoyed a good thing without wishing to share it with others. The author of this text was enjoying the greatest of blessings, the favor of God. He had been beset with fears, and God had given him deliverance. He had been in many troubles, and God had saved him out of them all. The gratitude and joy that filled his soul were not the result of a mere abstract view of the perfections of God, but of conscious communion with him, a personal experience of his goodness and love. The fears and troubles from which he had been delivered were the preparation for this deep joy expressing itself in this sublime burst of thanksgiving and praise. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." The darkest nights are often followed by the brightest mornings. This is the victory of faith, turning darkness to light, weakness into strength, out of the deepest sorrow bringing the highest spiritual joys.

If misery loves company, so does happiness, especially religious happiness. The command to go into all the world and preach the gospel to ev-

ery creature is written not only in the New Testament but in every heart renewed by the Spirit. Every converted soul is not only a recipient, but also a dispenser of the grace of God. All who freely receive also freely give. This is the universal law of the kingdom of God. Its application to each one of us may help us to determine whether we are so receiving the grace of God as to be in full sympathy with the spirit of the gospel commission.

Thus blessed with a sense of the goodness of God, the author of the text invites everybody to prove that goodness and to share the blessedness felt in his own grateful and happy heart. "O taste and see that the Lord is good." As if he had said: "I have found God faithful and gracious, a present help in time of trouble, a refuge in danger, a light in darkness. My glad heart is rejoicing in such a sense of his goodness that it overflows in a song of praise and thanksgiving. But I would not brood over my joy in silence and solitude until it stagnates and dies; I must tell the news: the Lord hath done great things for me whereof I am glad; come and I will tell what the Lord hath done for my soul. The Lord is good; test his goodness for yourself; taste and see." To taste and see that the

Lord is good is to understand his truth and receive his grace. The author of the text meant to imply several things:

1. This implies that there is a God who can reveal his truth to our minds; that we have minds that can apprehend God as he has revealed himself in his works and in his word. The idea of God and the worship of God are congenial to the human soul. The soul was made for God. Its longing for God cannot be laughed, sneered, or argued away. The poor heathen feels for him in the dark, and is never satisfied until he has found or invented some representation of him. The idea of God and the disposition to worship are inherent in human nature. The origin of this idea and this tendency is revealed in the Bible: He was made in God's image. He was made for God. Even in its ruins human nature shows marks of its high original. Under the regenerating and renewing power of divine grace, the soul of man is capable of the knowledge of God and may glow with adoration in the contemplation of the perfections of the divine nature. How weak and poor is that queer materialistic logic that seeks to prove that man was evolved from matter! Why do not the materialists go a step further in the path of absurdity,

and tell us that God was also thus evolved? If man was latent in matter—if the intellect of Newton, Cæsar, Napoleon, and Shakespeare, and the moral grandeur and nobility of Washington were evolved from the primordial cell, why limit the development short of Deity? If protoplasm can give us “Hamlet” and “Faust” and “Paradise Lost,” why may it not also give us the Thunderer of Sinai and the Judge at the resurrection? No; materialism will not, cannot satisfy the human soul. It cries out for the living God. The Bible reveals God to our minds, and whoever contemplates his glorious perfections in the light of his own truth will find a source of pure and inexhaustible enjoyment, leading him to say, “O taste and see that the Lord is good”—good in all the elements of his being, making him worthy of the adoration of all his creatures and worthy to reign over all the universe. Then taste and see. Search the Scriptures for yourself. You will find the very truth you need. The Bible is as many-sided as human nature, as many-voiced as the breathings of the human soul. In it every man may find the aliment that will nourish his soul, the truth that shall make him free, the light that shall guide his doubtful feet to God and heaven.

2. This text implies that we can enjoy an actual experience of God's grace. This is something more than an apprehension of the greatness and glory of God as he has revealed himself to us in his word and works. It means that every soul that trusts and obeys God feels and knows that he is good. Not only does our Heavenly Father speak to us in his word and in his works, but he speaks directly to the soul by his Spirit. The witness is within us. Thus it was with the author of the text: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and delivered him out of all his troubles." That is, he prayed and God heard and answered his prayer. How could he know that God heard him unless he had answered? Do you know what it means to have a prayer answered? A cry on earth, an answer in heaven. Is there anything like this in this life of ours on earth? I used to wonder when a boy what was meant by getting the answer, as my mother, speaking softly with a peculiar light in her loving eyes, would say God had answered her prayer. When she would come from her secret devotions, with radiant face and wet eyes, I saw that she had been conversing with God, that she had got the answer. That is the way to taste for yourself.

3. I had thought of speaking under different heads of prayer, faith, and obedience as channels of grace; but I cannot dissociate them. There is no real prayer without faith; there is no faith without obedience. They do so interblend that in treating them separately we may seem to put asunder that which God hath joined together. The root, the trunk, the branches, and the fruit all make one tree; so faith, obedience, and love make one Christian life. Every earnest movement of the soul toward God draws his grace toward it. Thus the believing, obedient soul continually tastes and sees that the Lord is good. When we speak of the means of grace, this is what we mean: that grace flows into the channels provided by the goodness of our God; prayer, praise, worship, service. If you would enjoy the goodness of God, keep these channels open. The wells in some of the California towns require that the water in them should be frequently pumped off to keep them pure and sweet. The clear crystal stream is struck far down in the gravel that underlies the alluvial nearer the surface, the "seepage" from which, brackish and impure, constantly flows in to defile the well. So there is a constant influx of worldly influence to dilute and defile our religious ex-

perience unless we keep the pump of prayer busy pumping the water of life from the deep wells of salvation.

4. The philosophy of religion is the inductive philosophy, "knowledge derived from experiment, in contradiction from theory." The only way to know is to do. The only means by which you can know the peculiar flavor of an orange is to taste it. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." This is the condition: Experience, not theory. The text is the language of experience, and is a challenge to all the world. Taste and see. The gospel makes this challenge to-day. There are many voices that are crying in the hearing of the world: "Taste and see." Pleasure presents her poisoned cup to the young and invites the taste. Passion excites many to drink eagerly, madly, and they find death at the bottom of the cup. Curiosity prompts many to drink of the forbidden cup. O the fatal fascination of the mystery of sin! Unlawful curiosity was the original sin. Our first parents would not resist the temptation to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Multitudes of young people take the first step toward hell from curiosity. The cup of sin is presented; they are curious to know how

it tastes, they press it to their lips and perish. Chemists tell you that prussic acid is a deadly poison, but it is better that you take his word for it than to take the poison in order to discover its taste and effects. It is surely unwise for a clean person to roll in the mud in order to find how mud feels. Leave the mud to the pigs. Keep out of it, young men—the mud of profanity, the mud of gambling, the mud of falsehood, the mud of licentiousness. We all know that fire will burn. Nobody will think it wise to thrust his hand into the fire to learn how it feels to be burned. Better take the word of God for it that sin destroys. Poison kills and fire burns. Do you believe it? Survey the ten thousand moral wrecks all around you. See them in the mire, never to get out. See them coming out of the fires of sin, scorched and scarred. I tell you they always come out of the fires of sin scorched and scarred. An unmaimed, unpolluted manhood is a glorious thing. It is a great mercy to get out of the fires of sin, but it is a blessed thing to keep out. When sin presents her cup, decline to taste. There is death in it. Do not even taste. A little poison is a bad thing. Sin is a fire hard to quench; it burns to the lowest hell. Let it not kindle upon your soul.

5. There is no risk in accepting the challenge to taste and see that the Lord is good. No man ever regretted being truly religious. The author of this text is supposed to be David. He was a competent witness. He had seen life in many phases, and tested his religion under widely varying circumstances. It had hallowed and brightened his joys in his day of prosperity; it had given him fortitude under the pressure of adversity; it had comforted him in his day of sorrow; it had inspired him with the loftiest courage in the hour of danger. He had found it adequate to all emergencies. In its blessed fruits he had found no discount upon its promises. At all times and under all circumstances he had found it good. And with this experience, and from the holy height of religious joy to which he had attained, he lifts his voice in triumph and invites all the world to the feast where his soul had been fed with the bread of heaven. "Taste and see that the Lord is good."

This is the sum of the teaching of this text. Be religious because you can. Pray because your prayer will be heard and answered. Obey, because you can obey, and because your obedience will be accepted and crowned with a blessing from God. "Taste, and see." This is the voice of God by his

Word. This is the voice of the Spirit speaking in its still small voice to your hearts. This is the voice of the Church. Hear this voice now. Accept the gracious invitation by beginning the new life. Or if you are a wanderer from God, come back to him now and be blessed.

IMPERATIVE MOOD, PRESENT
TENSE.

(191)

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” (Matt. xxii. 37.)

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Imperative Mood, Present Tense.

WHEN a command is given, our attention and respect are given to it in proportion to the authority and power of the personage by whom it is issued. A mandate issued by a king, a president, or governor commands at once universal attention and respect. The text is a command—not from an earthly potentate, not from an emperor, czar, king, president, or governor; but from the God of heaven and earth, the Creator and Ruler of the universe, the King of kings and Lord of lords. It comes from God through the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ. Coming from and through such a source, it demands our serious and prayerful attention.

Let us consider the meaning of the command.

1. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." The heart is the seat of the affections, the emotional part of our nature. To love the Lord with all the heart simply means that he must be the Supreme Object of affection. Not that we should love nothing but God, but that every other affection should be exercised in subordination to this controlling, supreme affection for our Heaven-

ly Father. God has given us no capacity for affection which he does not intend shall be exercised and developed to the utmost. He has not mocked us by giving us passions merely to tantalize us and make us miserable. The relations of husband and wife, of parent and child, of brother and sister, are relations established, regulated, and sanctified by God, and the affection that belongs to these several relations is approved by him and is intended to promote the happiness of mankind. We cannot love them too much; the idolatry of human affection is not in the extent, but in the character of the affection. It is not that we love too much, but that we love without reference to God. These endearing relationships are of his appointment, the objects of our human affection are the gifts of his goodness, and should lead us in grateful affection to the gracious Giver. Thus the more you are blessed with human love, the more you will love God; the more human love is exercised and developed, the more will be developed a supreme affection for the kind Heavenly Father, who is the Giver of every good and perfect gift. This is to love God with all the heart—with our best, highest love. This love is constant, not an occasional burst of enthusiasm, not a transient blaze now and

then in a time of revival or religious excitement, but a pure, steady, continual flame. This is to love the Lord our God with all our hearts.

2. "And with all thy soul." The soul is the immaterial and immortal part of our nature. To love the Lord our God with all our souls means that our souls shall go out after God in reverence, adoration, and awe; that in contemplating the perfections of God we shall behold supreme excellence, that in beholding the power, wisdom, goodness, and glory of God we shall recognize a divine perfection, in comparison with which all other excellence shrinks into insignificance. This is to love the Lord our God with all our souls.

3. "And with all thy mind." The mind, in the ordinary sense of the word, is that part of us which thinks, reasons, and reflects—the intellectual part of our nature. But the word "mind" sometimes is used to mean the will or the inclination; to have a mind to do a thing is to have the will or inclination to do it. It will bear, if it does not require, this meaning in the text.

Adopting this exposition of this text, we see its completeness and harmony. It requires, first, that we love God with all our heart—that is, that we feel right. Secondly, that we love God with all our

souls—that is, that we think right. Thirdly, that we love God with all our minds (will or inclination)—that is, that we do right. In man's unfallen condition all the faculties of his nature were in harmony, and in their legitimate exercise God was glorified, and man's complete and continual happiness secured. But by the fall, his whole nature—his affections, his intellect, and his will—became perverted and depraved; they no longer act rightly nor harmoniously. The will and the understanding, once united, are now divorced. The unregenerate man thinks one thing, yet does another:

“We know the right, and approve it too;

We hate the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue.”

With perhaps a large majority in Christendom here is the principal difficulty—in the will. They have a sufficient knowledge of religious truth, and conscience confirms its claims and obligations; but their wills are depraved, perverted, enfeebled, and they therefore fail practically to embrace and embody the truth in the practice of their lives. The gospel of Christ furnishes the only motives and influences to control, set right, and harmonize the thoughts of the soul, the affections of the heart, and the decisions of the will.

This, then, is a brief definition of the first and

great commandment. It is called the first because it embodies the groundwork, the beginning, of a Christian life; it is the great commandment, because it embodies the essence, the vital element of all religion. On this commandment hang all the law and the prophets; in obeying it we meet all the requirements of the gospel.

From the foregoing exposition, it will be seen that those who favor a merely intellectual religion on the one hand, and those who favor a merely emotional religion on the other, will find little encouragement from this text. God does not ignore the fact that we have both heads and hearts, that we both think and feel. A religion all feeling would sink into fanaticism and superstition; a religion all intellect and no feeling would freeze and die in the bleak and barren desert of a lifeless intellectuality. God has given us no one-sided, fragmentary religion; but Christianity is adapted to all the wants and capacities of our whole nature, makes men think right, feel right, and do right, for this is to love God with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the mind.

Let us next consider the reasonableness of this command. It is reasonable and right that we love God as required in the text, because we belong to

God. He created us, and not we ourselves. We are God's by creation, and a claim on our supreme affection is thus made which none can deny. The creature belongs to the Creator.

Gratitude is the most powerful of all incentives to affection, and this sentiment is most strongly appealed to in the gospel.

To God we owe our existence and all that makes existence desirable. But God in Christ makes the most resistless appeal to the gratitude of mankind. He loved us and gave himself for us; though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich; he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. This is the philosophy of salvation: the affections of mankind have been alienated from God, their only proper, supreme Object. In the incarnation of our Saviour, God descended to earth, labored, suffered, and died for us, that our affections might fix on him; and then, ascending to the bosom of the Father, he carried our affections with him, that, thus united to God by faith, we may draw life, peace, and joy from him forever. By creation God has a rightful claim on our affection; by endowing

us with infinite capacities for happiness that claim is strengthened; and by the incarnation, sufferings, and sacrificial death of Christ, a claim is made upon our affection that ought to be irresistible.

Again, we should thus love the Lord our God because there is no other being or object worthy the supreme love of our souls. Our souls are immortal. They are emanations from God himself. Man was created in his own glorious image, and, though fallen and debased by sin, he still retains traces of the divine character, and by the will of God is endowed with immortality; and therefore no being, no object but God can be worthy of his supreme affection. The material universe will pass away—the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, the elements melt with fervent heat, the moon be turned to blood and the sun obliterated from the firmament; but thy soul will never die; it will live on through the eternal years of God himself.

Therefore to make the perishing objects of this world the objects of supreme desire and affection—to love money, houses, lands, worldly pleasures, or worldly honors—is a base and ignoble prostitution of the immortal nature of man. The soul is immortal, and nothing but the God who breathed

it into existence is worthy of its supreme affection.

We should thus love God because nothing else can satisfy the boundless capacities of the soul. The soul was made for God, and nothing but God can satisfy its desires and fill its capacities. But these very endowments become, through the fatal blindness and perversity of mankind, the instruments for inflaming human pride and leading to forgetfulness of God. In this age the tendency is to deify the human intellect. This is the age of steam and electricity. Onward! is its motto. But take away the light of revelation, and all would at once become chaos and confusion, darkness and uncertainty. Like an immense railroad train, dashing on in the darkness of night with fearful velocity, without engineer or conductor, liable at any moment to come into collision with some obstruction that will crush all into atoms or plunge madly into some fearful abyss—so would this world be in this fast age without the Bible. Who are you, that you should declare your independence of God? Who breathed into you the breath of life? Who touched your mind with the divine spark of intelligence? From whom did you receive those very powers which, in your infatuation, would lead you

to forget God? These endowments of the mind, with its capacity for illimitable progression, are the gifts of God; and to him therefore we should bow in devout gratitude and adoring love.

Again, we should thus love God because by so loving him we shall be like him. What we love determines what we are. It is by loving God that we can be fully restored to his likeness and image, which is the design and effect of the gospel. Thus we are made partakers of the divine nature, changed into the same image from glory to glory. Through the eternal years of the soul's being it is destined to approach nearer and nearer to God without the possibility of ever reaching his perfection, like those mathematical lines that seem always approaching each other without the possibility of ever meeting.

Finally, we should thus love the Lord our God because God commands it. This is conclusive to the Christian. God will command nothing that is impossible or unreasonable. It is the highest rationality, the most reasonable thing that can be conceived, to obey God. He gives no command which he does not give grace to obey. He appeals to every motive that should prompt effort, and it is his good pleasure that we obey all his command-

ments, and particularly this first and great commandment, as embodying all the rest.

This command can be obeyed. The affections, the understanding, the will may be restored to proper direction and vigorous and harmonious action, enabling us to feel right, think right, and do right. Replenished daily from the heavenly Fountain, our lamps, trimmed and burning, may burn with a pure, steady, increasing light till merged in the resplendent blaze of eternal glory. To which blessedness may we all be brought by the abounding grace of God, to whom be ascribed all glory, honor, and praise, both now and forever! Amen.

AGREEMENT WITH GOD.

(203)

“ Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos
iii. 3.)

(204)

Agreement with God.

(Partly by Another Hand.)

EVERYTHING in Christianity is in strict accordance with moral law. Order is Heaven's first law—first in importance, involving the stability and well-being of the universe. The gospel is not merely glad tidings, but it is a law, the law for our action, and the law by which we shall be judged. It is the perfect law of liberty. In the natural world, God maintains order by the exercise of absolute authority. He enjoins order in the spiritual world, but does not compel obedience. We can obey or disobey. God leaves us free in the matter, simply warning us that if we disobey the laws of moral harmony our happiness is a moral impossibility.

This great truth is involved or suggested in the text. The prophet is here reproving the Israelites for their disobedience to God and denouncing punishments against them—which punishment should be measured in exact proportion to the privileges they had enjoyed, and the grace they had abused. The Jews thought that because they had been the chosen people of God and had been blessed with a wonderful degree of temporal prosperity

therefore they enjoyed the divine approbation. Their mistake was twofold: First, they supposed that the condition of their union with God was legal and not moral; that obedience was in the observance of the letter of the Mosaic ritual instead of its spirit, preferring sacrifice to mercy. Secondly, they mistook temporal prosperity to be unquestionable evidence of the divine approval. Temporal prosperity is a blessing or a curse according as it is received—to the godly a blessing, to the ungodly a curse.

The principle announced by the prophet is this: that the union between God and man must be a moral union. If we accord with God in feeling and action, he will approve us. If not, he will condemn us; for, "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" This question appeals to conscience and common sense. Let us consider it with a seriousness and earnestness commensurate with its gravity. And what question can equal this in importance: Am I in friendship with God? Is there moral union and harmony between him and me? This world and all its interests are to perish; but the soul, with its affinities, desires, and habits, will abide forever. These tastes, desires, and habits will eternally determine the weal or woe of us all.

If we are not agreed with God, we cannot enjoy his smile. If we are not like him, we cannot be with him. If we do not agree with God, he cannot agree with us. Have we this agreement?

But how can we determine this question? The infinite God shuts himself from immediate observation, conceals from our bodily eyes the brightness of his visible presence; our minds could not comprehend or endure the unclouded manifestations of his glory. Yet he has manifested himself in such a way that we can determine the question suggested by the text, whether we are in a state of enmity to God or of union with him. And the method is simple enough.

Bodily presence is not necessary in order that we may know whether we harmonize in opinion and feeling with another individual. If he has given expression to his opinions and feelings, that is enough. You may have read in the newspapers the expressed sentiments or public acts of some public character; and if these opinions and acts express cruelty, tyranny, meanness, and falsehood, you feel a strong aversion to the character of that individual, though you may have never seen him. Moral sympathies and aversions may be as readily tested as agreement of taste in music, painting,

natural scenery, oratory, or anything else. All that is necessary is a common object of contemplation in order that we may test our agreement or nonagreement concerning it. This is the principle by which we may test whether we are agreed with God. And if we apply ourselves to the subject with an earnestness commensurate with its magnitude, we shall reach a safe and satisfactory conclusion.

The proposition I shall attempt to prove is this: Unregenerate man is not at agreement with God. In other words, he has no moral union with him. His tastes, his principles, his affections are not in harmony with the nature and will of God. He does not walk with God, does not sympathize with his purposes. Let us consider some evidences of this fact:

1. The indifference of men in regard to God's approbation or disapprobation is itself an evidence of his alienation from him. This indifference is an extraordinary fact; it is at once a consequence and a proof of man's apostasy from his Maker. What other cause can be assigned for this indifference? It cannot be a deliberate conviction that the question is unimportant; for it is impossible for a believer in the Bible seriously to reflect upon his po-

sition in the sight of God and his tremendous interest in eternity, and lightly dismiss the subject from his thoughts. No; this indifference is one of the fearful and mysterious effects of sin, dimming the soul's perception of the highest truths and blinding it to its highest interests, its relation to God and its immortal destiny. We repeat: the very indifference of men concerning their agreement or nonagreement with God is an evidence that they have no moral union with him, that they are "alienated from God by the ignorance that is in them." We are assuming here the truth of the Bible doctrines of the immortality of the soul, a judgment to come, and future rewards and punishments; for if you take the Bible from us, we have no basis for any argument, any belief, or any hope.

2. The opposition of the unregenerate man to the law of God. The prerogative of making laws for the government of his creatures God will exert all the energy of Omnipotence to maintain. The law of God is as dear to him as the happiness of his creatures and his own honor and glory, for upon the supremacy of his law depend the creature's happiness and the Creator's glory. It is said in the Scripture: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither

indeed can be." This statement is explicit and unmistakable. And is it not true? Do not unconverted men complain of the holiness of the divine law, murmur on account of its strictness, and in their hearts rebel against its denunciations of punishment against sin? I once heard a brother say in the class meeting that there was not a word in the Bible he would expunge or change. Can you with sincerity say as much? If not, you are not agreed with God; for every part of that word is dear to him. He framed the law, proclaimed it, and will maintain it. Men deceive themselves with regard to their opposition to the law of God, because its restraint is moral, not physical. It merely tells them that its violation is wrong, and threatens a future penalty; it does not prevent them from transgression by force. Sometimes men are punished for speaking disrespectfully of human governments and earthly rulers; and if in their minds hostility already exists, such punishment only the more confirms and intensifies it. God's law prohibits the taking of his name in vain, and threatens punishment in case of disobedience; yet he leaves men free to disobey if they will, and therefore men use profane language without realizing the extent of their opposition to this divine

law; they may even banish all thought of the law from their minds, for God does not obtrude it upon their unwilling notice. Suppose God were to use physical force, to lay a hand upon the mouth to check the utterance of the oath that is rising hot to the lips—how the heart would swell with rage against the law! As it is now, most swearers neither care nor think much of God's law against profanity. So with his law against Sabbath-breaking. God has said: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The Sabbath-breaker may sally forth on Sunday morning without hindrance to desecrate the holy day, banishing both the law and its Author from his mind. But suppose the Almighty were to meet him in the way, drag him to his home and shut him up in his dwelling, or drag him to the house of worship and keep him there during the service—in that case his opposition to God's law against Sabbath-breaking would be realized as never before. Friend, ponder this view of the subject well; for if you do not in your heart approve God's law, you are not agreed with him.

3. The choice of companions is another test of our agreement with God. Are our preferences such as God approves? Do I love goodness for its own sake? God loves holiness, humility, faith,

penitence, prayerfulness. He says in his word: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite heart." This is the man that God loves, these are the qualities that are precious in his sight. To the possessor of these features of character he speaks with infinite tenderness; "he would pass by thrones and senates to wipe away one tear from that eye and comfort that broken heart." Are you agreed with God in this? Look at Lazarus at the rich man's gate. His exterior is not attractive; he is poor, friendless, a cripple and a beggar. Yet he is a good man. His views are God's views; his sympathies are in harmony with God's; he submits cheerfully to his sufferings because God has permitted them to visit him; he rejoices that he is able to suffer the will of God. There is nothing attractive in this man to the eye of the world. But he is loved of God, who sends angels to watch over him in his dying hour, and to bear his free and happy soul to paradise. Are you here agreed with God? Or would you prefer the rich man, possessed of everything desirable and admirable but religion? "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." In speaking of the pious, God says: "In them is all my delight." What says your heart?

Do you admire genius more than goodness? Do you prefer wealth, talent, culture to simple holiness without these? Then your preference is not God's preference; you are not agreed with him.

4. Love to enemies is another test of agreement with God. Some think this is impossible. If so, no man can be agreed with God; for this is one of the most prominent features of the divine character. God loves his enemies; we are required to wear God's moral image; grace is promised to enable us to do so; therefore we must love our enemies. Have you an enemy, one who has slandered you, injured you in property or otherwise? Do you love this enemy? If not, you are not agreed with God, for God loves him, though he may be his enemy too. "God so loved the world"—the world of sinners—"that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." He sacrificed his Son to secure the salvation of men. The marvel of this love is, that it was love to his enemies. "God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly." Are you agreed with God in this? Does this work appear worthy of him? Does the work of saving men seem to you more important than any other?

or does pleasure, profit, or honor more engage your esteem and desire? Ponder the question well, for it is a test question. If you are not more concerned for your own salvation and for the salvation of others than for the interests of time, you are certainly not agreed with God, for with him the spiritual salvation of men is the paramount consideration concerning them.

5. Submission to the providence of God is another test of agreement with him. What God does is right. What he permits must be best. The man whose judgment has been clarified by the teachings of God's word knows this to be true. The man whose soul has known the saving power and conscious comfort of the Holy Spirit feels it to be true. The mysteries of God's providential dealings are not understood; but he waits on God, trusting the promise that what he knows not now he shall know hereafter, "trusting God where he cannot trace himself."

6. Another and final test is the disposition of the heart toward Christ. And this test, fairly applied, is conclusive. It determines the question beyond doubt or controversy. "What think ye of Christ?" He is the only-begotten and well-beloved Son of the Father. The testimony borne to

him everywhere is this: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God says he is well pleased in Christ. What do you say? Look at him as he lies in the manger; hear him in reproofs, denunciations, and threatenings of sin; hear him rebuking the self-complacency of the young ruler, who thought himself almost ready for heaven; see him as he hangs upon the cross; see him in the day of judgment, coming in the clouds of heaven to judge the world, separating the good from the bad; see Jesus, poor, despised, persecuted, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; see him scorned, crucified—and what think you of him? God says that he has "raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right-hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet;" that he has "given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and that every tongue should confess." Thus God exalts Christ. Do you thus exalt him? If not, you are not agreed with God. When the gospel is faithfully preached, Jesus is presented as crucified for man's redemption. Yet how many are in-

different, how many stumble at the doctrine of the cross! Under such preaching you have been aroused to feel your dependence upon Christ and your need of his mediation; you saw pardon and peace offered to you in his name and through his blood; you were almost persuaded to be a Christian. But you could not give up your idols; you decided in your heart that you could not choose Christ and renounce the world. You remember that time; you recall the deep anxiety that weighed down your soul; how near God seemed to you, and what a view you had of a bleeding Saviour lifting his hands and calling you to come to his heart of love. And ye would not, thus showing that you are not agreed with God.

The question of the text must address itself to the judgment of all: "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" If you cannot abide the tests presented, how can God walk with you, how can he bless you as his child if you do not love him as your Father? To bless you with his favor while you are disobedient to his holy law; to save you while you reject Christ; to take you into holy and blessed communion with himself with a nature unholy, earthly, sensual—this is a moral impossibility. God cannot save you in your sins without ab-

dicating the throne of moral government. Intellect, accomplishments, wealth are nothing in the sight of him who looketh upon the heart and requireth truth in the inward parts. "These cannot bribe nor dazzle the perfect eye of eternal Purity and Justice."

If you have no sympathy with God in the particulars mentioned, let me ask solemnly and affectionately: "What would you do in heaven?" What is heaven? Happy, intimate, perfect communion with God. The good are taken thither, that their communion with God and vision of God may be complete. Would this be heaven to you? If you know nothing here of the delight which prayer affords, if you know nothing of the fellowship of the saints on earth, what will heaven be to you? It will be a heaven without a God, without society to you. There God gathers around him his children—those who have loved, served, and honored him, who have labored for his glory and maintained his cause. What will you do with them? Will you sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven to talk of money, of lustful indulgence, of your schemes of ambition? Will you talk to the saints in the light, the valiant champions of truth, who fought the good fight of faith and conquered

by the blood of the Lamb, will you talk to them of billiards, cards, of horse-racing? Will you talk to angels and glorified spirits of the things that engage you now—of dress, of the faults and failings of your neighbors? God has prepared the good things above for them that love him, and none else can enjoy them. "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" God has prepared no heaven for any but the holy.

A mother who had lost a sweet little child not long before said to me: "O sir, I am afraid I cannot be good enough to meet my dear child in heaven." What a solemn thought! If you were called on this day to bid an eternal adieu to all your religious relatives and friends and to abandon the hope of ever seeing again the loved and lost, could you do so without regret? Yet unless there is agreement of moral disposition it will be so.

Think of this subject. Pray over it. You must take your position and choose your relationships for eternity.

WE KNOW.

(219)

“ Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John iii. 2.)

(220)

We Know.

THE present privilege of believers is sonship with God. We know—this is the keynote of this whole Epistle. The holy John had gotten above the region of doubt, speculation, and guessing into that of knowledge.

1. We may know that we are the sons of God now by the witness of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Our love of the brethren certifies the same blessed fact: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "We know," says the Christian. "We doubt," says the skeptic. "We deny," says the infidel. "We despair," says the baffled philosopher, who walks in darkness.

2. We know further, that Christ shall appear. It is assumed here and explicitly stated elsewhere. This is a gracious, glorious certainty to the true believer.

3. We know that we shall be like him. Who can picture this likeness? Like him—like him in our glorified body, like him in our emancipated

intellects, like him in spiritual purity, like him in happiness without alloy.

4. We shall see him as he is, and this vision of God will be assimilative. The contemplation of excellence is always so. It is measurably so in this life; it will be perfectly so in the next. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness," said an Old Testament saint. God himself is our ideal; we shall be lifted toward that ideal, and we shall be satisfied at every stage of our progress.

Satisfied! O, it is a great word; but ours is a great salvation.

THE GOOD TREE.

(223)

“ Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.” (Matt. vii.
17.)

(224)

The Good Tree.

THESE seven words of Jesus affirm a truth of the profoundest significance—namely, that character is the basis of conduct; that what we are determines what we do; that out of the heart flows the life; and that therefore the one supreme object of a human life is the proper formation of character.

It has been well said that Christian education is the formation of character on Christian principles. This truth, affirmed in this text, is a fundamental principle of Christianity. Life develops from within; out of the heart are the issues of life. If you would have good fruit, you must first make a good tree. “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”

The root of Christian life is faith. Faith is belief in God as he is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the belief of the heart—that is to say, the choice of the will. This is the most solemn and momentous act of a human life; it is that transaction by which a human soul becomes united to Christ and is thenceforth a living branch of that Living Vine. This union takes place when your willingness meets his willingness. This is the

sweet, glad gospel of Christ, the gospel of the new birth that begins the new life. To some this experience comes so early and so gently that the day, the week, or the year could not be fixed. Born and reared under happy conditions, with gracious heredity and favorable environment, their early conversion was as noiseless as the budding and blooming of the spring roses. To others it may have come at a later period when the moral revolution was more distinct to their own consciousness, and the memory of which will be precious to them forever. Let your willingness to follow Christ meet his willingness to receive you, and the vital union between you and him is then and there established. The principle of a new life is imparted, a new life that shall interpenetrate, rule, guide, and glorify your life forever. This is the beginning. Other foundation can no man lay. Faith opens the door and lets Christ into the heart. Is there any mystery here that you would have me explain more clearly? I can explain it only as I can explain any other phenomena of life. I cannot explain the principle of life in a tree, but the fact is plain enough: the trunk, the branches, the blossoms, the foliage, the fruit show there is a living tree. So the fruit of a Christian life demonstrates

a living Christianity. A healthy, growing tree seems almost to rejoice in conscious life as its leaves flutter in the breeze and its branches bend under the weight of the ripened fruit. The true Christian, born of the Spirit, and in vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ, rejoices in conscious spiritual life; and, whether he can explain it to another person or not, he knows that there is a supernatural element in his life that gives it a new direction and power, and makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus. Begin here. If you have already made this good beginning, now, by a fresh consecration, ratify that decisive act and receive a fresh and fuller inflow of the life of God into your life. If you have not hitherto done this, do it now. Put your hand into Christ's hand for time and for eternity. Take the Lord Jesus Christ into full partnership. Take him into your heart by this simple, sincere, unreserved act of choice; and then he will be with you always; he will go with you where you go, and stay with you where you stay. Take Christ fully into your life. He is knocking at the door; lift the bolt and let it fly wide open that he may enter and bring light and love, truth and grace. This is the beginning. Begin here; begin now.

Thus you see that faith is the root of the Tree

of Christian Character, and we are ready to consider the next point—the growth of the tree. Conversion precedes culture. Birth first, growth afterwards, is the natural order.

When you plant a fruit-bearing tree, you do not plant it out on the open common; you plant it within an inclosed orchard or garden where you can protect it, cultivate it, prune it, and train it in its growth. So the tree of Christian character should be planted within the inclosure of the Church, which is fenced off from the world by wise and gracious regulations. Every Christian, young or old, should be a member of the Church. The Church is God's own agency for the salvation of the world. To despise or neglect the Church is to neglect and despise Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. Plant the tree, and let it strike its roots deep within the inclosure designed for it. This signifies permanency of connection. Thus planted, the believer "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." (Ps. i. 3.)

The making of a tree may seem to be an easy matter. It has nothing to do but just to grow. But it may not be as easy as you think. First, you must have a seed or a germ; then you must have

proper soil; then you must have the air, the sunshine, the rain, and the changing seasons; then you must have certain chemical processes for the assimilation of the elements that compose it; and last of all, you must have time. Growing is not a lazy thing even for a tree. I have stood awe-struck and wondering in the midst of the Mammoth Grove, the *Washingtonia Gigantea*, in California. Gazing upward, up, up, up, more than three hundred feet, so high that the tallest poplar in Virginia or Tennessee would not reach its first branches, its trunk nearly or quite one hundred feet in circumference, I have thought of the time and labor required for its growth from the tiny seed or little bulb from which it started. The sap that nourishes the topmost twig had to be pumped up from the ground more than one hundred yards below. Is pumping easy work? Just try it for five or six hours at a stretch and see. The chemical processes by which the growth of the tree is carried on require the incessant activity of the subtle yet potent forces employed. Though silent, the energy exerted is immense. Then the sap that is pumped up must be pumped back again. Nor must we forget that the warmth that started the sap and kept it in circulation had to travel a distance of more

tian ninety millions of miles. You catch the analogy? Planted in the soil of this world, you grow just where God has planted you. The fair flower and sweet fruits of the Christian life bloom and grow and ripen in the midst of the every day experiences of our lives, while the light and warmth requisite for spiritual growth come from that eternal Sun of Righteousness that floods the moral universe with its glory.

Let us change the figure, but not lose sight of the point in hand. Consider the growth of your own body. The simultaneous growth of the whole organism is a wonder. The mysterious principle of life is there to start with. Each hand, each finger, each side of the face, each eye, each ear, grows with all the rest. If it were otherwise, what monsters of deformity would result! One limb short and the other long, one eye large and the other small, one side of the face longer than the other side—what grotesque and ugly creatures we would be! God sees a sadder sight than that: he sees the dwarfed, deformed spirits of men and women, who are crippled, blinded, deaf, stunted, because they have violated the laws of spiritual life and health and growth. There is, St. Paul tells us, a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. The

natural body in its perfect development is God's own model of physical perfection. He glorified it in the incarnation. Of all that is known to us this side of the world of spirits, the perfect human body is the most beautiful. When utterly broken and debased by sin nothing is so hideous. There is a spiritual body—the body you are forming here day by day. The spiritual body—what does that mean? In that wonderful fifteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul gives us one side of the matter. He tells us what is to be the nature and capacity of the spiritual body of the redeemed after the resurrection; it is to be immortal, incorruptible, endued with tremendous energy. Sown in corruption, it shall be raised in incorruption; sown in weakness, it shall be raised in power; sown a natural body, it shall be raised a spiritual body. Spirituality, immortality, incorruptibility, power—these are the very things we want. Nothing, however, is said concerning the resurrection body of the wicked. This silence is ominous. They too have spiritual bodies that they will carry with them forever. Physical beauty and spiritual beauty have an unmistakable correlation, but are not identical. The law of natural heredity sometimes puts an ugly soul into a beautiful body, and

vice versa, in this world. But every observer knows that evil passion is a sure destroyer of physical beauty. Shakespeare's witches are as ugly as they are wicked. Early in my California life I met a woman of surpassing beauty; among a thousand women the beholder would have stopped to look at her and ask her name. Twenty years afterwards I met her again. She was then in prison, a murderer, broken in body, the marks of ungoverned passion on every feature of her once beautiful face. She was a monster of ugliness—the ugliness of sin. If you take Sin as the companion of your life, she will transform you into her own image; the evil passion in the soul will find expression in the face, and hell will be mirrored in the baleful light of the wicked eyes. On the other hand, the beauty of holiness anticipates in a measure the transfiguration that shall conform the glorified body to the glorified spirit of the child of God. I have seen the human form dilate and the human face shine under the afflatus of the Holy Ghost in seasons of pentecostal power in the Church, and I have been awed and thrilled by the visible reflection of the divine presence. But I have seen a still more impressive demonstration of divine power and grace in the transfiguring touches that clothed saintly

women with unearthly beauty in the midst of sorrow and pain, though the passing years had taken the bloom from their cheeks, the sparkle from their eyes, and the roundness and elasticity from their wasting frames. The heavenly beauty of the souls within was reflected in their faces, and as the partition walls grew thinner the light broke through, their worn bodies shining with foregleams of the glory they will put on when mortality shall finally be swallowed up of life. This is the beauty of holiness—not the beauty of color or form or carriage, but a beauty that has a subtler quality and a diviner glory, the beauty reflected from our Immanuel's face. It is the beauty of souls born of the Spirit, disciplined by pain, chastened by sorrow, and ripened for heaven in the sunshine of the Lord.

I have already said that time is a necessary factor in the growth of a tree. The processes of nature cannot be hurried; if you hurry them, you spoil them. A tree must make wood before it can make fruit. The process requires time. I saw in California a dwarf pear tree three feet high, its branches loaded with pears. But it never grew any more—it was dwarfed beyond remedy. The laws of growth are as inexorable as they are beautiful.

The processes of grace in the development of a true Christian life are orderly: "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." God is patient with us; let us be patient with ourselves and with one another. Let young Christians be young Christians; let them feel like young Christians; let them pray like young Christians. Do not put them into a strait-jacket. The young tree must make wood before it can make fruit. Let it grow and develop according to the law of its life. An oak does not grow in a hothouse like a floral exotic. It grows in the open air, meeting all the changes of the seasons—spring, summer, autumn, winter. In the activities of the Christian life—in reading and hearing the word of God, in secret prayer, in religious conversation, in helping the needy, and in all the ministrations of affection and philanthropy—the young disciple grows into the image of his Lord and brings forth fruit unto the honor and glory of God.

The law of habit asserts its power in the evolution of a true Christian life. If we study the laws of God and put ourselves in right relation to them, we shall find that in all cases they work for our good. The habit of regular prayer makes prayer delightful. The habit of faith makes faith easy.

The habit of hopefulness makes it more and more the uniform temper of the soul. The habit of patience strengthens patience until it has done its perfect work and attains its highest maximum, the believer running with patience the race set before him, looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Make habit thus your friend now, and it will bless you forever.

The Fruit. The end of a fruit-bearing tree is fruit. An oak, maple, or elm is designed for shade, but when you plant a peach tree you want peaches. If you do not get peaches, the tree is a failure. The true end of all Christian culture is fruit. We are not left in doubt as to what this fruit is. St. Paul tells us: "The fruit of the Spirit"—not the fruits of the Spirit, there being such unity in the operations and results of grace in the heart that the whole work is spoken of in the singular number—"the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." That is to say: The graces that in their aggregated influence and results make true Christian character and constitute the blessedness and glory of the Christian life are the fruit of the Spirit that worketh in us to will and to do according to

God's good pleasure. We work because God works in us. Paul plants and Apollos waters, and God gives the increase. Therefore where there is sincerity, success is certain. We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us. Your endeavor, however weak in itself, brings in the help of God; and the two conjoined have never failed.

BEWARE!

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“ Quench not the Spirit.” (1 Thess. v. 19.)
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Beware!

HERE is a warning tender as a mother's heart, solemn as the judgment seat of God—Beware! The Holy Spirit is the immediate Author of spiritual life in the hearts of Christians. Distinct personal attributes and acts are ascribed to him. He speaks, he teaches, he reproveth, he makes intercession for the saints, he helps their infirmities. He is grieved. Apostles are set apart by him to the work of the ministry, and he appoints them to that work. "He searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." The Holy Spirit leads the responsive and willing soul to salvation. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to enlighten, to quicken, to regenerate, to sanctify, to strengthen, to comfort—in a word, to enable the believer to triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil, to fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life. Abundant Scripture texts might be cited in support of what is here said of the Holy Spirit as the immediate author of the spiritual life of believers. These texts need not be quoted here, as they are doubtless familiar to most of the readers for whom this Meditation is written.

It is a solemn and fearful truth that the Holy Spirit, without whose help the sinner cannot take the first step toward the kingdom of heaven, may be driven from the soul. In the significant language of this text, that influence may be "quenched." The word describes the process of extinguishing fire by water. The Holy Spirit is the light of life burning in the soul; the text tells us that this light may be quenched. How this may be done is an important inquiry.

1. This light may be smothered. A fire may be kindled, and may begin to burn, yet be quenched by heaping on it incombustible material. The flame will be smothered and die. So the Spirit may be quenched in the soul. Persons who feel the touch of the Holy Spirit may partially yield, and the heavenly guide is ready to lead; but they venture within the range of adverse influences, they go into improper company, they allow the pursuit of pleasure or ambition to engross all their thoughts and all their time—and thus they quench the Spirit, smother with worldly cares, excitements, and vanities the light of life.

2. This light may be quenched by indulgence in sin. There are certain noxious gases that immediately extinguish any flame they touch. So will sin

quench the Holy Spirit in the soul. That Spirit—the Holy Spirit—will not dwell in the heart polluted by sin. The soul may feel the gracious movings of the Spirit, the mind may be solemn and thoughtful, the heart may be broken and contrite, and the whole moral nature brought under the influence of the Spirit; but yielding to temptation the divine law is willfully broken, the voice of conscience is unheeded, and immediately there is a sensible alteration of thought and feeling. If these acts of sin are persisted in, darkness, coldness, and deadness supervene; the Spirit is quenched. He that would not quench the Spirit must avoid sin.

3. This light may be quenched by neglect. A fire may be kindled and then suffered to go out by neglect. So with the Holy Spirit in the soul. When he enters the soul, his presence must be cherished, his warnings heeded, his suggestions adopted and acted upon. A contrary course will quench the Spirit. To neglect this great salvation is to lose it.

Quench not the Spirit! O heed the solemn injunction, ye believers that have been born of the Spirit. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "Walk in the Spirit," as the apostle entreats, and you will walk safely.

The light that is in you will shine more and more to the perfect day.

Quench not the Spirit! O sinner, listen to this warning. This faithful friend has followed you long. When forced by your sin and neglect to depart he has chosen some propitious hour to return. Does he follow you still? If so, listen to his voice now, lest he take a sorrowful but final departure. Quench not the Spirit!

COMING INTO TOUCH.

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“ Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.”
(Jas. iv. 8.)

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Coming into Touch.

A DEEP thinker has said: "The profoundest conviction of an awakened soul is the fact of its separation from God." This fact is not realized by the unawakened sinner. At best his consciousness of it is so vague that it produces but little effect upon his mind, and as little upon his life. The man who is in the stupor of a deadly disease or the delirium of a raging fever loses his natural physical appetites, and only recovers them with the returning health. So with the sinful soul: it is diseased, enfeebled, perverted, asleep—yea, in the strong, figurative language of Scripture, dead—dead to truth, to holiness, to God. His whole moral nature antagonizes the nature and will of God. But he does not realize this; he may assent to it as a doctrine of theology he has been taught to believe; but he does not feel it until he is quickened by the Spirit of life. Then, as the reviving convalescent calls for his natural food, so the awakened soul asks for its proper food, its chief good; it cries out for the living God, it hungers and thirsts for the bread and water of life. This is the first indication of spiritual life, and the first step toward the recovery of

spiritual health. The soul was made for God, and cannot be happy without his favor. The immortal soul can no more be happy without God than could our mortal frames be sustained and enjoy health and vigor from breathing nothing but air, or from swallowing only poisons. The prophet uses this very figure in expostulating with his foolish and wretched countrymen who had forsaken God—who had left the Fountain of living waters, and hewn out for themselves broken cisterns that could hold no water. God is the living Fountain of pure and endless felicity. The enjoyments of sense, the pleasures of the world, are mere cisterns, and broken cisterns at that—limited in capacity, artificial contrivances that are constantly liable to contract impurity, and get out of repair—poor cisterns indeed, whose supply is uncertain, whose waters become stagnant and poisonous, and which soon decay and become incapable of holding any water at all. Such are the things of earth, contrasted with the soul's true good, which is God. Broken cisterns! Who does not know what this means? That man who made honor his idol and the object of pursuit, and has outlived all his ambitions, hopes, and schemes, and is approaching old age and the grave a disappointed, soured, miser-

able misanthrope; that sensualist who made pleasure his idol, but who has outlived the enjoyments of youth, and found satiety and disgust, and who is descending to his grave in the bitter conviction that all is vanity here, but with no assurance of something better beyond; the poor lover of riches, who has spent his noblest powers and put forth his best energies to make money, and is hastening to the grave, after all, poor and miserable, cheated by the world, and unblessed of Heaven; the poor devotee of dress and fashion, who has frittered away the best part of a lifetime in these puerilities—these all know what the broken cistern is that can hold no water. But alas! how strangely reluctant they are to go to the Fountain of living water! They hew to themselves broken cisterns—not one, but many fruitless experiments in search of happiness, one folly succeeding another, one false light after another luring them on until death closes the scene. “Why,” demands the prophet, “do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?” These cisterns hold no water securely; but even if they did, that water could not satisfy the soul of man. It is a common saying that the more a man gets the more he wants. “He that

heaps up riches shall not be satisfied with riches." Sinful pleasure does not satisfy, but its votary either recoils in disgust or is inflamed with the torment of insatiable desire. The honors of the world never satisfied the worldling. The philosophy of these things the men of the world do not consider or understand. It is this: The soul is greater than all material things combined; it was made in the image of God, is immortal, and capable of enjoying God forever, and never until the last link that connects it with religious hope is broken, the last cord that draws it heavenward severed, can it be satisfied, though it may grasp all that this world gives or promises to give. The soul will not be cheated of its true riches without a protest. So it clamors for more, sighs for something better in the midst of earth's dearest delights, looks above and beyond for something nobler and more enduring though surrounded with all the honors of the world. The desire to turn from these dead idols to the living God is the first sign of spiritual life.

This sense of separation from God is preliminary to drawing nigh to him. Man is far from God in the sense that the creature is far from the infinite and all-perfect Creator, but as a sinner he is at a moral distance from God. He is "far from God by

wicked works," the fruit of a wicked heart. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself illustrates this by the parable of the prodigal son. The gulf of separation between God and a thoroughly sinful soul is as wide as that which divides heaven from hell. Holiness makes heaven; sin is hell. But that gulf may be bridged. The sinner may draw nigh to God, and God will draw nigh to the sinner. This language does not imply that there will be absolutely any change in God, but only relatively. God is unchangeably and eternally the same holy, just, and beneficent Being, without variableness or shadow of turning. The sinner must change his attitude toward God. This implies several things:

1. As already shown, the sinner must realize his separation from God. This perception of the soul's separation from God will be realized at some period of every person's life, at least in a measure, though the light may be partially quenched, the truth smothered in some degree.

2. Following this perception of the soul's separation from God comes the desire to return. The soul then draws nigh to God in its desires. It hungers and thirsts after righteousness; it cries out for the living God.

3. Next the soul draws nigh to God in its pur-

pose. Seeing that God is the chief, only, and eternal good of the soul, he says in his heart: "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Thus he draws nigh to God in this supreme purpose of his soul.

4. The sincerity of his purpose is evidenced by his diligent use of the means of grace. He seeks association with the people of God, he improves all opportunities to read and hear God's Word, to receive the sacraments and ordinances of God's house—in a word, he is willing and ready to approach God in God's own way and to receive his grace through the channels he has graciously and wisely appointed. He does not despise God's Church, nor slight any of its means of grace.

5. He draws nigh to God in prayer. In prayer the soul approaches God directly. All the desires, aspirations, feelings, and purposes of the soul are drawn out in prayer. In earnest prayer the soul draws nigh to God in a peculiar sense; the world is forgotten, the visible and transitory gives place to the invisible and eternal; the world is shut out, and the soul, face to face with God in humble dependence and trust, seeks directly for light, for forgiveness, for strength, for purity, for salvation.

Thus we draw nigh to God, and, thus drawing nigh, all who approach him in sincerity will realize

that God will draw nigh to them. He will meet the returning wanderer, and answer all the desires of the awakened soul. Of course we are not to understand that God ever changes in his nature or disposition toward his creatures, but simply that he acts upon principle in his moral administration, and bestows his promised blessings on conditions which are within our own power. The condition of his drawing nigh to us is that we draw nigh to him.

1. This implies that God aids us in our approaches by his Holy Spirit. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us." The Lord marks and encourages the first risings of holy desire. "I waited patiently for the Lord," says the psalmist, "and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry." The Lord draws nigh to us in gracious assistance when we draw nigh to him in earnest desire.

2. When we draw nigh to God in penitence, he draws nigh to us in mercy.

3. When we draw nigh to God with our emptiness, he draws nigh to us in all his infinite and eternal fullness.

4. When we draw nigh to God in our weakness, he draws nigh to us in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save.

5. When we draw nigh to God in our trouble and sorrow, he draws nigh to us with his peace, revealing himself as "the God of all comfort." Draw nigh to God with a broken heart, and he will draw nigh to heal.

Be encouraged thus to draw nigh to God, because the way is open, the new and living way, by our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. God is near you this moment just in proportion to your desire for his mercy and peace. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach." God is nigh unto all that call upon him."

Our approach to God here on earth is necessarily imperfect; we are burdened and fettered by human infirmities and disabilities. In heaven our approach to God will be direct, our vision of his face will be unclouded, our enjoyment of his presence will be without interruption or alloy. We shall there see him as he is, and know even as we are known. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

CALAMITIES A CALL TO
REPENTANCE.

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“ There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Luke xiii. 1-5.)

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Calamities a Call to Repentance.

OF the vengeance executed against the Galileans by Pilate, there is no trace to be found in Jewish or Roman history. Josephus makes no allusion to it. He constantly maintains a studious silence on such subjects, the motive for which silence was doubtless a prudent regard for his own interest and personal safety. The most plausible conjecture seems to be this: The Jews in the time of our Lord were divided into two principal parties, the Galileans and the Herodians; the latter supporting the Roman authority, and the former opposing it. The Galileans were an agricultural people, and lived in a hilly or mountainous country. Such a people have always been distinguished by their independent spirit and love of liberty. The man who stands upon his own soil, breathes the free air of the country, and looks up to the capacious sky spreading its ample canopy above him, who is familiar with nature in her native grandeur and amplitude—this man will be the first to resist and the last to submit to tyranny. The Highlanders of Scotland have never been conquered. During the war for American independence Washing-

ton remarked that if all the cities of the colonies were taken by the enemy and the country overrun everywhere else he would retire to the mountains in Augusta County, Va., and there make a last stand for liberty. In the fifth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles mention is made of a sedition made by these proud-spirited Galileans headed by one Judas. It is supposed that those whose blood was mingled with their sacrifices were a portion of these seditious Galileans who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Passover, of whom Pilate made an example with a view to intimidate the rest of their unruly countrymen. This conjecture may be the right one. And with regard to the other instance of awful and sudden death mentioned here it is probable that the tower which fell upon and killed the eighteen victims was built over one of the porticoes near the pool of Siloam, mentioned in the ninth chapter of John. These, however, are not matters of importance. The text alludes to localities familiar and contemporaneous events well known to his hearers. His purpose is to impress truth upon their minds and to lead them to repentance. He would correct their erroneous views concerning divine providence and the principles of divine government. He would teach them

rightly to interpret national calamities and individual afflictions. He asserts the sovereignty and providence of God, and would lead them to acknowledge the one and to trust in the other.

What different views do men take of the events of human history and the vicissitudes of individual existence! And how blind they are to the truth! how generally are the lessons which God would teach them misunderstood or unheeded! Especially is this true with regard to the judgments, the penal and admonitory visitations, of the Almighty upon the children of men. Let us consider some of these errors.

I. A common error is indifference to the judgments of God. Men are generally stupid and inattentive concerning the work God is doing in the earth. God stretches forth his hand, but men do not regard. If their own persons are not in danger, if their property be not threatened nor their pleasures interrupted, no matter what judgments are abroad in the earth, a majority of men are little concerned. They never stop to inquire the designs of Providence. Of course they cannot be wholly unaffected by the strokes of Providence. The terrible tragedies alluded to in the text seem to have excited some attention and elicited some

remark. "There were present at that season some who told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." Such an event could not fail to become a subject of current conversation at least until some other new thing should demand attention. But the impression was superficial and transient. The judgment did not come home to the survivors, and they took it not to heart. So with men now. They see no providential agency, they discover no moral significance in the great events and signal occurrences transpiring among nations and in individual lives. The politician only asks how these things will affect his party, and how he may from them reap political advantage; the merchant and the banker ask how they will affect business; the man of the world, in a word, looks on these things with a worldly eye, and with a heart indifferent to all but merely worldly results. The Christian takes a wider view. He sees God directing all events, in all public calamities he recognizes his messengers of justice and warning; and in all things he adores that God without whose notice a sparrow does not fall to the ground, and "who makes flames of fire his angels and winds his ministers." He believes in a living God, and from all his present works, as

well as from the record of his past doings, learns his will divine.

2. Another error is blindness concerning God's judgments. By blindness I do not mean the natural weakness of intellect of those incapable of reflection and a sound judgment. I speak of those who "profess to become wise, yet become fools;" who plume themselves on a fancied superiority over the prejudices of the vulgar, and are all the more blind because they think they see. Among this class are those who deny the doctrine of a particular providence, and look upon those who recognize the hand of God in the affairs of this life as credulous and weak-brained. They refer everything to second causes; recognize no agency above human in the transactions of the world, regarding nature as the all. Surely this is blindness, not to see that God rules the world he has made—not to see that above Pilate, the Roman Governor, is Jehovah, the Governor of the universe; that above nature, and controlling nature, is nature's God. For what is nature? "Either it is nothing, or it is the aggregation of what God has created; either the effects of nature are nothing, or they are the products and effects of the laws by which God has arranged and by which he governs his creation;

consequently, whatever we call natural effects, and the result of second causes, are the work of God and the effects of his established laws." An earthquake is a natural effect, and proceeds from a second cause. But who made the earth, and established the laws by which earthquakes are produced? Either God or chance. If chance, then there is no God. If God, then it is proved that natural effects are the works of God, the results of his established laws.

Again: God, in the arrangement of his laws, knew every effect which would result from their operation. God does not learn from age, nor grow wiser by experience. To deny this would be to profess atheism. God, then, has foreseen all these effects; they enter into his plan, and he designs they shall work to an appropriate end. All that he does is in accordance with his design—not only in great events, but in the smallest also. Everything in his works consequently entered into his counsels and contribute to his designs. There is a God in nature and in providence, and not to recognize his hand in the various events of life is the blindness of folly and atheism.

These arguments from reason are confirmed and illustrated in Scripture. Joseph in Egypt is an il-

lustration. He was wickedly sold by his brethren; yet God sent him. The Assyrians were bent on conquest in the invasion of Israel, but they were the rod of God's anger. Do the wicked Jews afflict and crucify the Son of God in the malignity and blindness of their evil hearts? They are carrying out the purposes of God. God has his purposes in all that transpires, and in his chastisements he would teach us lessons of instruction. In the midst of great judgments overthrowing the nations surrounding them, and general profligacy and disobedience among the Jews, God thus spoke by the prophet Ezekiel: "As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, . . . a third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, . . . and a third part shall fall by the sword, . . . and a third part I will scatter. . . . So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction." This is God's design in afflicting other men—viz., our instruction. He would thus teach us.

God would teach us further, first, that we must not suppose that the most afflicted are always the most guilty. This was a common notion among the ancients. When any misfortune befell an individual, they said at once that "the gods were an-

gry with him." This idea was very prevalent among the Jews. The opinion was common among them that all calamities of this life were the punishment of sin. The mistakes of Job's friends were based on this principle; they assumed that Job's extraordinary sufferings were the consequences of great wickedness. The disciples, concerning a man born blind, asked this question: "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" This supposed that every calamity was the result of some crime; and they carried it so far as to suppose that it included sins committed in a preëxistent state. This idea is involved, apparently, in the question mentioned. Those who reported the massacre of the Galileans were doubtless of this opinion; and this notion our Lord refutes: "Suppose ye that those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, . . . were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

2. They were blind to experience. The wicked have in all ages been possessed of worldly prosperity. Pilate is on the throne; Jesus is on the cross. Nero is in the palace; Paul in a dungeon. The wicked spreading himself like a green bay tree, the

righteous afflicted—it is the old tragic puzzle of life.

3. They forgot or denied a future judgment. They did not consider that the punishments of sin in this life were not adequate or equal; they ignored the judgment which is to come. If this existence were eternal, their argument would have had some force. But as there is a future judgment, when goodness will be recompensed and sin punished, the absurdity of their notion was manifest.

4. They forgot the value of afflictions. Men are afflicted for their good sometimes. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” The Lord chastens us for our profit, and brings us to submission by parental stripes. His love compels the infliction of chastisement. There is benignity in the pain of penitence; there is mercy in the agony of the heart that bleeds because its idol is torn away; there is love in the violent alarms that arouse the guilty conscience; there is fatherly goodness in the denial of desires the gratification of which would be attended with danger and ruin.

“Good when he gives, supremely good,
Nor less when he denies;
E’en crosses from his sovereign hand
Are blessings in disguise.”

5. They exhibit blindness as to their own hearts.

Self-knowledge is a great help to the exercise of charity. A consciousness of our own imperfections, a remembrance of our own misdoings, will make us lenient in our judgment of others. "I am the chief of sinners; but I obtained mercy," said Paul. He was so impressed with his own sinfulness that he extenuated that of others. "In lowliness of mind, let each esteem another better than himself." This is only possible in the sense that you know your own heart better than you do the hearts of others. Who of us does not know more evil of himself than of any other individual?

Mankind remain obdurate under the judgments of God. And because of this obduracy their design is frustrated. That design is to bring men to repentance and salvation. He thus forewarns them of the judgments which will come upon them unless they repent: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." This was the design with regard to the Jews. The sentence against them, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," was literally executed. On the day of their passover, when the people had gathered from all parts of the land to offer their sacrifices, Archelaus surrounded the city with his cavalry, sent his foot soldiers into the temple, and massacred three thousand persons.

Josephus tells us that the factions who held their sittings in the temple "extended their revenges to the altar; they massacred the priests with those who offered sacrifices. Men who came from the extremities of the earth to worship God in his holy place fell down slain with their victims, and sprinkled their blood on the altar, revered not only by the Greeks, but by the most barbarous nations. The blood was seen to flow as rivers; and the dead bodies, not only of natives, but of strangers, filled this holy place." The Roman army under Titus besieged Jerusalem precisely at the time of the passover, captured the city, gave it up to slaughter, and the blood of eleven hundred thousand persons was mingled with their sacrifices—thus justifying the expression, "Suppose ye these Galileans were more culpable? Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Thus was the prophecy of the text literally fulfilled. During the same siege the walls of Jerusalem were sapped, and, falling, buried multitudes in their ruins, literally fulfilling the other part of the prophecy: "Suppose ye that those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell . . . were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Certainly here is a re-

markable coincidence—a fearful prophecy and a fearful fulfillment.

What, finally, is the lesson God would teach us from this text? That we have an interest in the great events that are transpiring in our days—that the calamities which afflict others call us to repentance—repentance for our own sins, not somebody else's sins; not the sins of this party or that party, but the sins of our own hearts and lives.

THE FIFTH BEATITUDE.

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“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”

(Matt. v. 7.)

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The Fifth Beatitude.

MERCY here means the active love of our neighbor, expressing itself in all possible deeds of benevolence toward the needy, forgiveness of wrongs committed against ourselves, and the improvement of all opportunities to do good to all men. This mercy, bear in mind, presupposes the previous work of grace wrought in the soul described in the preceding verses. The progress continues from a principle of righteousness implanted in the heart to its development in the constant exercise of an active love toward our fellow-creatures. Mercy, in the text, is the conformity of our feelings and conduct to the Golden Rule.

This mercy is an attribute of God, and exists nowhere but as it is derived from him. To the extent that any man possesses the principle of mercy, in the sense of the text, is he a partaker of the divine nature? Are none then merciful but true Christians? None are merciful save those who from an impulse of grace, recognized or concealed, practice toward others whatever they seek for themselves. This definition, while it opens the door of mercy to the heathen, whom many shut

out by their narrow restrictions of the grace of God, may shut it against some who fondly suppose it will fly wide open at their knock.

1. Negatively considered, this mercy is not mere natural sympathy, which even the most wicked are sometimes obliged to feel. It is not the sickly sentiment that weeps over the catastrophe of a yellow-covered novel, or the mock agonies of the stage.

2. This mercy is not refined selfishness, which makes us complaisant and indulgent toward our own flesh and blood, and the narrow circle surrounding our own interests and individual relationships. Family relationships and peculiar friendships are not only sanctioned by the Word of God, but are brought under the control of grace, regulated, strengthened, and sanctified. But when affection goes no farther, it is merely natural, not gracious; it is merely the operation of a principle of self-love, instead of the heavenly principle that makes a man "merciful" in the sense of the text.

3. This mercy is not devotion to a party, to the exclusion of all who are not embraced within its lines. The principle of mercy which comes from God is like its Author, diffusive, reaching to all men, "without partiality and without hypocrisy."

It does not mean fraternity to such as agree with you in all your opinions, and death and destruction to the rest of mankind. If the gospel is misunderstood or disregarded by those who should be its exponents and exemplars, it is the crime of the false teacher, the misfortune of the falsely taught, not the fault of the gospel, which is an infallible and unchanging rule of conduct. This mercy is none of these things, though often the mistake is made of supposing that it is.

Positively considered, this mercy is the love of our neighbor. This consists of and is manifested in a compassionate regard toward others, and the improvement of all opportunities to do them good. It is an emotion excited in the heart by the discovery of any creature's danger or misery, and a corresponding outward conduct—a mercifulness of disposition and action. This mercy is manifested by a regard for the souls of our fellow-men. As their immortal interests are paramount in importance, so a true view of our obligation to love our neighbor requires that we seek first of all to promote his spiritual welfare. This requires, negatively: 1. That we abstain from all conversation and all conduct that might injure his soul. This excludes all profanity in public places, for the tend-

ency of this vice is to destroy reverence for God and regard for his will. Of course it excludes profanity in the presence of your neighbor's children. As to a man's swearing in the presence of his own children, great indeed must be the thoughtlessness or recklessness of the man who will be guilty of it.

2. The violation of the Sabbath comes under the same principle, is excluded on the same ground. And so with all the commands of God, the violation of which would tend to endanger the immortal interests of our fellow-men. Does then the Golden Rule require that a man shall be a Christian? It does, for in no other way can a man show an active love for his neighbor's soul.

This mercy is shown by a practical regard for our neighbor's temporal welfare. This embraces his good name, his property, his feelings.

1. The truly merciful man will not only not bear false witness against his neighbor, but he will not speak evil of his neighbor even truthfully unless right and duty require. This mercy does not allow a wanton dissection of character, with no better motive than a mischievous and malignant pleasure in exposing the frailties and imperfections of our fellows. If this be so, how often do we violate the law of mercy in our dealings with one another!

Mankind naturally seem to be animals of prey; they love to hunt one another down; often, like wolves, when one of a pack is wounded, the rest tear him in pieces and devour him. So society generally treats its wounded members. Woe to the man or woman whose reputation receives a wound, however slight! The whole pack of tea table talkers, street corner babblers, and fireside gossips open cry, and the unhappy victim is hunted into despair or the grave. Christian mercy would soothe and heal such wounds; while the savage rabble of human passions would stone the sinner, that mercy which breathes the Spirit of Jesus says: "Go in peace, and sin no more."

2. This mercy requires that we regard our neighbor's temporal interest, and conform our business intercourse to the Golden Rule. Who does this? Who does this in buying and selling? in borrowing and lending? Is not the practice of the Church too much conformed to the spirit of the world? The maxims of business men in our centers of trade are such as will not stand the test of Bible principles nor the scrutiny of the final judgment. Let Christians beware lest they conform to these low and worldly standards of business morality. And let business men beware lest the maxims of

trade ruin their souls. Custom cannot cancel or condone sin.

3. This mercy requires that we regard the feelings as well as the reputation and estate of our neighbor. There seems to be a strange want of perception here. Many who would revolt at the idea of maiming or wounding the body of a neighbor, or casting a stain upon his character, think nothing of lacerating his feelings by unkind and bitter remarks, by needless insults, and stinging innuendoes. Alas for the bluntness of feeling that does not see that the soul can feel as well as the body! Its wounds are harder to heal, yet how carelessly are they inflicted! Take care how you launch these barbed arrows; they may strike where you intend not; sped at random, they lodge in hearts which cease not to writhe with anguish until death brings the rest that thoughtless tongues will not permit on earth. It is not the tongue only that makes these wounds; a glance of the eye, a curl of the lip, a toss of the head, may send a pang to a sensitive heart, that will leave its smart long after it may have passed from the memory of the thoughtless mind.

4. This mercy also requires the forgiveness of injuries. This means that we must not only for-

bear to retaliate injuries, but repay evil with good. Mere natural amiability will not enable a man to do this. There are divers motives which may prompt a man without religion to forbear the retaliation of injuries—prudence, avarice, cowardice. Nothing but religion will enable him fully to forgive a grievous wrong; nothing else will make him “merciful” in the sense of the text. Revenge is natural to the human heart. Men have compassed sea and land, they have traversed deserts, scaled mountains, ravaged nations, desolated cities, to gratify revenge. There is an Arabian proverb: “Why should a man care to die the day after his enemy?” Atrocious as seems the sentiment, is it not generally acted upon in the world? Is not this the spirit that keeps up dueling and war? Men will run the risk of ruin to themselves for the hope of ruining an enemy. True Christianity alone conquers the spirit of revenge. The grace of God can and does enable a man to love his enemies, after the example of Christ. If few have shown this spirit in our day, it may prove that there are few practical Christians, but it does not invalidate either the truth or the excellency of Christianity. Perhaps this one good may grow out of the war: it may reveal to the Church how far its standard has

been sunk below that of the Sermon on the Mount. After these storms have blown over, I anticipate a glorious reaction in favor of Christianity; the light will shine so clear that good men will see eye to eye everywhere; the barriers which now keep them disunited will fall down, and the true followers of Christ will come together and under the banner of love will march onward to the millennium. Come, happy day! sink down, ye separating hills! dispel, ye clouds of prejudice and wrath that darken our horizon to-day! Come, bright morning of hope and promise! Spirit of God, kindle in our hearts the fire which burns in love, not in hate!

Then we shall be blessed; being thus made merciful, thus exercising mercy, we shall obtain mercy; thus forgiving, we shall be forgiven; thus loving, we shall receive love; thus seeking to bless, blessing shall abound unto us.

CERTAINTY.

(277)

“ Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.” (Rom. xiv. 1.)

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Certainty.

CHRISTIANITY has been quarreling with itself during all these long centuries of its history. Disputation began in the very lifetime of the apostles, and mainly with regard to nonessentials, the mere externalities of religion. Paul and Peter themselves had a difference on an issue of this sort. At Rome a dispute had broken out between the Gentile and Jewish converts with regard to the observance of certain matters of mere form. Paul at this time had never been to Rome in person, and it is thought that he got his information concerning these things from Aquila and Priscilla. Be this as it may, he seemed to know the whole case, and he sought promptly to apply the remedy. He had the quick eye and steady hand of a good surgeon. He pleads for toleration and for true religious freedom. The substance of his plea is that the questions in dispute were unimportant, not essential to salvation, and should not be allowed to disturb the peace of the Church. He would convince them that the cardinal truths of the gospel were too glorious, and the actual experiences of believers too precious, and life too short, to allow them

to waste time and words in disputes about minor matters. Of course we are not to understand the apostle as undervaluing the fundamentals of Christianity, but only to warn the Church against trifling and needless disputation. Paraphrased freely, what he would say is something like this: "Dear Christian brother at Rome, don't be an extremist; don't stickle for trifles; don't ride hobbies; don't perplex and worry your brother with disputings about mere questions of meats and days. And don't permit him to trouble you with such things. He may be weaker than yourself, or you may think that he is, but his heart may be just as true as yours, and to his own Master he will stand or fall." There is only one question to be asked concerning him: "Is he in the faith?" The faith! How grand, yet how simple is the faith! It is concreted in the confession that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of sinners. The correlative facts and inductions are in some degree within the mental grasp of any man who has intellect and moral perception enough to make him accountable to God for belief and conduct. But who can measure their breadth and height, or fathom their depth? Repentance toward God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of sins, the witness of the Spirit, a new

heart and a new life, resurrection from the dead, a judgment to come—all these correlated beliefs and experiences we are in the habit of designating the faith. Concerning some of these points of belief a fellow-believer's conception may be vague, his mental grasp on them may be weak. But he may be none the less sincere, he may be none the less an accepted follower of his Lord, a child of grace, and an heir of heaven. His Saviour hath received him. You must receive him. What does that mean?

1. It means that you must admit him to membership in the visible Church of Christ. It is Christ's Church, not ours. Every one who would follow Christ should belong to his Church. Take the weak brother in if he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. Give him the right hand of fellowship, and let your heart and hand go together in so doing.

2. You must give him your sympathy and your help according to the measure of his need and of your ability. You must give him the use of the means of grace, throw around him the bulwarks of Christian truth, and fortify and encourage him by your Christian example and influence.

3. You must bear with his infirmities. It is easy

to do this when your own heart is right. But playing at Christianity is hard work. What is drier, harder, colder than a constrained Christian fellowship? But genuine Christian fellowship is heaven on earth in its essentials on the positive side. It is love that makes heaven. Where love is, is heaven. The kingdom of heaven is within the hearts of believers. It can be nowhere else. We must carry this heaven within us if we expect to reach the heaven of our hopes hereafter. In the old days that are gone we have had sweet fellowship with Christian friends who have entered into the fellowship of the saints in light. They were not all equal in strength of intellect and of faith. They were all weak enough even at their best so far as their own strength was concerned, but they overcame in the strength of the Lord. We will follow them as they followed Christ. We will not stop to dispute about trifles, nor waste time on little things. The great things are the things that are certain. We will not disturb ourselves or others with doubtful disputations. Certainty! that is what we want.

PAUL'S PARADOX.

(283)

“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities,
that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (2 Cor.
xii. 9.)

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Paul's Paradox.

It is a little remarkable that this wonderful event in the experience of the apostle Paul, the most wonderful in all his extraordinary career, should not have been mentioned by him for fourteen long years. And it was only mentioned at all because it seemed to be necessary thus to vindicate his apostolic authority against certain false teachers who were aspersing his character, disturbing the Church, and leading the people into error. With the same motive he had, in the preceding chapter, felt constrained to refer to his sufferings and services in behalf of the gospel, not to glorify himself, but to glorify God, whose grace was sufficient for him. This language was so unusual to Paul that he throws himself upon the indulgence of the Corinthian Church, asks them to bear with him while he compares the credentials of his apostleship with those of the factious errorists who were leading them astray. In this twelfth chapter he pursues the same subject, and under the strong constraint of duty he reverently lifts the veil which had for fourteen years hidden from the gaze of the world the sublime revelation afforded to him. He seems

to feel that he is treading on holy ground, where he must walk with uncovered head and feet unshod. He seems almost to whisper the words with drawn breath: "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such a one caught up to the third heaven. . . . How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, not lawful for a man to utter." He knew a man in Christ—how modest is this man of God! A man in Christ—nothing in himself, but all in Christ—a man in Christ—*i. e.*, a man filled with his Spirit, upheld by his grace, and lifted into heaven by his power. Whether in or out of the body, he could not tell; the vision or revelation was real; there was no doubt about that; his soul was caught up to paradise, but the manner of it was above his knowledge. How he got there was more than he could declare; and what he heard, he could not unfold. It was too sublime for human speech; too sacred, it may be, for mortal ears. Though Paul had never before mentioned this vision and these revelations, yet we cannot doubt that the great and

glorious truths taught by him were communicated at least in part while in paradise. In these very epistles he tells that which he could never have known save by a special revelation from God. And is it strange that Paul had a poor opinion of this world in comparison with the things that are above? He had been there; he had seen and heard, the scene had enraptured his soul; henceforth the paltry treasures, honors, and pleasures of earth are insignificant in his estimation. Is it strange that he was more abundant in labors than others? that he gloried in persecution and tribulations for Christ's sake? Are you surprised to hear him say: "This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize?" What Paul saw thus, we may see by faith, and like him be animated and inspired by the view to press forward and take the prize.

Paul breaks off abruptly in the narration of his heavenly vision. While vindicating his apostolic claims, he would not seem unduly to exalt himself; and, conscious of his own weakness and unworthiness in himself, he is fearful lest he might be thought of more highly than was proper. He would guard against the insidious approach of pride and

self-love: "I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me." The holy apostle only sought the good of men; he was indifferent to their honors.

But it is evident from the dealings of Providence with him that the apostle had been in danger from spiritual pride, a sin to which the holiest Christians are liable, from which the most wonderful revelations and blessed experiences furnish no security. Every blessing, every endowment of heaven brings with it a corresponding danger of its perversion or nonimprovement. This is a law unvarying in its operation, showing that, varied as are the circumstances and experiences of the children of men, God deals impartially with all, the scales of eternal Justice are held with an even hand. Paul had been in the third heaven, where he heard unutterable words; but he returned to earth with his imperfect, fallible human nature, and is therefore liable to sin, even to have the very abundance of the revelations he received turned into an occasion for sinful pride. Such is the deceitfulness of sin, such is our liability to go astray until death releases us from our conflict. God would save his servant from this sin of pride, so he sends him "a thorn in the flesh," a "messenger of Satan to buffet him." Opinions vary

as to what this thorn in the flesh was. Dr. Kitto's opinion is the most likely—namely, that it was a very painful affection of the eyes. But whatever it was, the apostle recognized it as providential—sent for his good. Therefore he did not complain; he knew it was better to suffer outward affliction than to perish from inward corruption. Spiritual pride especially is so dangerous a sin that any means of cure or prevention should be thankfully welcomed. God sees our danger often when we do not see it ourselves, and he prevents us by his mercy. Hence, instead of complaining or distrusting God when suffering affliction or visited with adversity, his hand should be recognized, his goodness praised; for he afflicts us for our profit: "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Better affliction than ruin.

The severity of this affliction was such that the apostle, while submissive to the divine will and uncomplaining, wished for a release from it. No measure of grace will make us insensible to pain. The apostle prayed for deliverance; how much better was this than to have spent his breath in murmuring against God, or in doleful complaints to his fellow-creatures! He prayed to the Lord—that

is, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by this prayer he acknowledged as God Almighty, Omniscient, Omnipresent, truly and essentially God. The apostle had prayed to the Lord in other trials, and always had found him a present help in time of trouble. He now carries his great pain to the mercy seat; but, strange to say, he seems to pray in vain; he obtains neither relief nor comfort. He prays again with the same result. The third time he prays, and then he receives an answer; thus teaching us to persevere in prayer, to knock, and keep knocking, until the door is opened. The answer, however, did not come as Paul desired; yet it came. The Lord said to him: "My grace is sufficient for thee." You must carry this thorn in your flesh, but I will give you grace to endure; you must bear the cross, but I will give you strength. He prayed for rest, but the Lord sends grace, which is far better. It is an adage that we do not know how much we can bear until we are tried; the believer does not know the power of God until he gets to the end of his own strength. Grace is better than health, ease, or physical comfort. For God's strength is made perfect in human weakness; when weak in ourselves, then we are strong in him. "Most gladly therefore [says the apostle] will I

rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

This is the conclusion of the apostle; this is the lesson he learned in heaven and confirmed by his experience on earth. Most gladly, therefore, he chose rather to glory in his infirmities, his afflictions and sorrows, than in his visions and revelations, because by these he was drawn nearer to Christ and led to experience more of his presence and power. By the revelations he was exalted temporarily above the world and sense, but this was a small thing compared with the profitable lessons he learned in the school of affliction.

1. He was taught to be humble. Under the pressure of his great affliction he was led to realize his unworthiness and weakness. Such times are favorable for self-examination—a duty and means of grace which at other times we are prone to neglect. Self-examination, properly conducted, is the sure preventive against, and antidote for, spiritual pride and vainglory. Thus a man is made acquainted with the evils of his own heart and the errors of his life, and thus he will be abased in the sight of God and led to walk softly before him all the days of his life.

2. The apostle thus learned his dependence upon

Christ. Utterly weak and helpless in himself, he was led to feel his dependence upon Christ, the only Saviour, the support of all who put their trust in him. In all his sufferings he was supported by the power of Christ, who hath said to his disciples: "Without me ye can do nothing. I am the Vine; ye are the branches; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the Vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." He learned that the power of Christ rested upon him only when he was emptied of self-righteousness and self-dependence; that there is no promise of grace to the proud and self-sufficient Pharisee, but only to the humble, contrite, and confiding soul.

3. He learned to rejoice in tribulations. He gladly gloried in infirmities. This is a different thing from enduring them in sullen silence. In such a heart there is no faith, no inspiration, no power of Christ, no gladness, no joy. Alas for the sufferer who has not Christ formed within him the hope of glory! The Christian rejoices in afflictions; not only conquers them by endurance, but more than conquers them by exulting in the power of Christ which rests upon them. Thus have martyrs sung joyful hymns in the midst of the flames; thus have multitudes of the Lord's faithful ones

rejoiced in the hour of sorrow, and, dying, said: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." The power of Christ is sufficient for all believers at all times and in all things—power to succor in every temptation, to sustain in every trial, to comfort under every sorrow; power to lift the soul above the world, and fill it with glory and with power, finally to raise the believer from the grave and exalt him to glory, honor, and immortality. The power of Christ is the Christian's power, and Christ's glory is the glory that we shall share when Christ comes in his kingdom.

"If any one saint needs the humility of many saints, it is he that is called to suffer. To glory in his sufferings for Christ become him well; but to glory in himself for them is hateful. He needs a quick eye and a steady hand that has to drive his chariot on the brow of so dangerous a precipice." (Gurnall.)

"Faith's great power is to renounce, and to bring the power of God to be ours. Happy they that are weakest in themselves—most sensibly so! That word of the apostle is theirs, 'When I am weak, then I am strong;' they know what it

means though it is a riddle to the world." (Leigh-ton.)

"Look upward for the grace needed now, and forward for the rest that remaineth." (Anonymous.)

"The devil drives but a poor trade by the persecution of the saints: he tears the nest, but the bird escapes; he cracks the shell, but loses the kernel." (J. Flavel.)

ABBA, FATHER.

(295)

“And because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” (Gal. iv. 6.)

(296)

Abba, Father.

HERE is a biblical bonanza that can be worked for what is in it by whosoever will. To some readers it may be new. To others it will be none the less precious because their faith had already grasped the truth that when the fullness of the time was come there was a clearer, fuller, sweeter revelation of the fatherhood of God and the sonship and heirship of believers.

The fullness of the time came according to the wisdom and will of God, who knows all times and seasons. In answer to the question, "Why was the world so long without Christianity?" a preacher of the last generation says: "Truth being unchangeable, the gospel is the same at whatever time it may be produced. Consequently there was no loss to those who lived before the incarnation, for the virtue of Christ's atonement depends not upon the time when it was made but upon his divinity. Christ came at precisely the proper time. The state of human language at the time; the fact that the world was then prepared to examine the claims of the Gospel; the fact that the world was then fully able to appreciate its doctrines by com-

parison and contrast; the fact that Christ came in the fullness of time as regards the types, promises, and prophecies of the Scriptures"—all these facts lead to the same conclusion.

“Behold the greatness of thy Creator veiled with the goodness of thy Redeemer; the justice of a first person qualified by the mercy of a second, the purity of the divine nature uniting itself with the human in one Emmanuel; a perfect man to suffer, a perfect God to pardon; and both God and man in one person, at the same instant, able and willing to give and take a perfect satisfaction for thee. O my soul, a wonder above wonders! an incomprehensibility above all admiration! a depth past finding out! Under this shadow, O my soul, refresh thyself. If thy sins fear the hand of justice, behold thy sanctuary; if thy offenses tremble before the Judge, behold thy Advocate; if thy creditor threaten a prison, behold thy bail; behold the Lamb of God that hath taken thy sins from thee; behold the Blessed of heaven and earth, that hath prepared a kingdom for thee. Be ravished, O my soul, O bless the name of Elohim; O bless the name of our Emmanuel with praises and eternal hallelujahs.” (Quarles.)

“God hath not in vain taken upon him the name

of a Father, and he fills it up to the full. It is a name of indulgence, a name of hope, a name of provision, a name of protection. It argues the mitigation of punishment. A little is enough for a father. Therefore in all temptations it should teach us, by prayer, to fly under the wings of our Heavenly Father, and to expect from him all that a father should do for his child, as provision, for protection, indulgence, yea, and seasonable correction also, which are as necessary for us as our daily bread; and when we die we may expect our inheritance, because he is our Father. But yet we must remember also that the name of father is a word of relation. Something also he expects from us. We must reverence him as a father, which consists in fear and love." (Sibbes.)

Jesus was God manifest in the flesh. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" is his own statement of this stupendous fact. God manifest in the flesh: we hear him speak, we see him work, we feel his touch in the words spoken by Jesus, in the wonders he wrought, in the grace he bestowed. Our union with Christ gives us Sonship with the Father, and, because we are sons, we have indubitable attestation of the fact. God calls us sons because we are sons. He calls everything by its right

name. In our measure we may know as certainly as Jesus knew that we are the children of God. All the fullness of blessing that the personal assurance of our Lord Jesus Christ could impart were he still with us here in the flesh, his Spirit does impart in the present tense to the true believer.

ANOTHER COMFORTER.

(301)

“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.” (John xiv. 16.)

(302)

Another Comforter.

THE manifold grace of the triune God shines forth in this pregnant passage of his holy Word. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are presented in right relation and in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel which we believe and preach.

Another Comforter! That was a startling statement of Jesus, that it was best for his disciples that his bodily presence should be withdrawn from them. The reason why it was so is in the fact that in some way clearly known to Him, yet mysterious to us, the Holy Spirit was to be poured out upon all flesh in fuller measure than ever before, inaugurating the dispensation which was to be the culmination of the grace of God in the potency of its agencies and universality of its triumph. The element of time is the one feature that invites attention in this Meditation. Its keynote is in the closing word of the text—"Forever!"

The ministry of the Holy Spirit can be continued on any given line until it becomes effectual. He can repeat a needed lesson until it is fully learned. There is no impediment from absence, fatigue, weakness, sickness, or any other cause

that belongs to the plane of our physical being. The Holy Spirit is able to conduct the disciple all the length of the heavenly way, beginning with the rudiments of spiritual truth, and going on from grace to grace and from glory to glory. (The Holy Spirit has been teaching patience to some of us many years, and is still at it. If we have been slow learners, he has been a patient preceptor.) Taught by the Holy Spirit, in the language of the apostle, we magnify the name of "the God of patience and consolation" for things that "aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

In this prayer and promise of our Lord the risen Christ, the living Church, and the indwelling Spirit are linked in a blessed and unending union. What the personal presence and immediate touch of Jesus was to the little band of disciples in the days of his flesh, the Holy Spirit is to the whole body of believers in the Church universal forever. What Jesus was in direct personal intercourse with any individual while he was with us here in the time of his fleshly sojourn, the Holy Spirit has been, is, and will be to every one of the unnumbered millions of his followers. We stagger under the

weight of such a truth, while it thrills us with a mighty joy.

Forever! Does this closing word open a still wider vista and reveal a glory yet greater? The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the unity of the Godhead is the satisfying portion of each and all of the redeemed that shall be gathered out of every kindred, tribe, and tongue of earth. Forever! The word is as big as the believer's hope, and that is as big as eternity. Forever! In this connection it is as sweet as that love that is dearest of all things to these human hearts that cry out for the living God and expect to be fully satisfied only when they awake in his likeness.

Forever! Certainty is assured to the sincere believer—"present grace being the pledge of future glory." The Voice that spake as never a mere man could speak makes heavenly music to the inner ear of the believer here: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye

know." (John xiv. 1-4.) Yes, Jesus knew what was in these hungry human hearts of ours that long for certainty with regard to a life to come. He knew the longing of our hearts to see the faces and to hear the voices of our beloved dead who have crossed over into the mystery and silence beyond the grave. If it were not so, he would have told us—blessed words of the blessed, pitying Christ! That he spoke these words, we may be sure. That he knew whereof he affirms, we may be sure. That he is able to fulfill all that he has promised, we may be sure. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—all in the present tense.

THE GOOD FRUIT OF THE GOOD
TREE.

(307)

“ The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering,
goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” (Gal. v. 22, 23.)

(308)

The Good Fruit of the Good Tree.

MARK, the singular number is used here: "the first fruit of the Spirit." The Holy Spirit imparts life, power, and unity. Systematic study of the Word of the Lord and regular and right habits of devotion and service are not to be ignored nor undervalued. But the holy apostle here affirms the great truth which cannot be too clearly understood nor too constantly acted upon—namely, the good tree produces the good fruit. A religion of form only is a burden too heavy for human nature. Men break down under it, or break over into folly and sin. The Master himself taught us this vital truth when he said: "First make the tree good." This is that process of supreme importance that takes place when God gains full possession of the soul that gives itself fully to him. The true believer knows what this is. Every soul to whom this gospel of Christ is preached may know. The witness of the Spirit to his own work satisfies. Satisfies! That is a mighty word, and it describes a mighty work of God in the soul. The certainty of attainment is measured by the greatness of the blessing.

Certainty!—that is what we want. And it is what is promised and given. This is a present tense salvation, a present tense that stretches on and on world without end. Read the words in the light of this statement: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” All that relates to subjective experience and all that relates to outward conduct is in the present tense.

Now is the day of this salvation. And to some who will read this Meditation it is nearer than they have believed. The fruit of the Spirit is “love, joy, peace”—love first of all and inclusive of all. Claim it by faith, and get it. Hold on to it by faith, and keep it. Witness to it with joy, and spread it.

THE KEYNOTE: COME, LORD JESUS.

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“ And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”
(Rev. xxii. 17.)

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The Keynote: "Come, Lord Jesus."

WHOLE libraries have been written in exposition of this last chapter of the last book of the Bible. It is full of mystery. It has a strange fascination. It has thrilled the hearts of multitudes to whom it was not given to know the times and the seasons, but whose souls responded joyfully to the promise of the coming of our Lord. "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." The chronology of this promise has been the puzzle of the ages; the blessedness of it has been felt by every generation from the date of its utterance down to this day. It is certain that the early Church expected its fulfillment in a sense more literal and more immediate than was justified by the event. That they were disappointed and bewildered is certain. The scoffers asked in the lifetime of the apostle Peter, "Where is the promise of his coming?" consoling themselves with the declaration that since the fathers fell asleep, all things had continued as they were from the beginning of the creation. The apostle's reply to their taunt does not satisfy their curiosity or ours, but it does what is

far better. He vindicates the veracity of the Lord, magnifies his long-suffering, and takes occasion to exhort all concerned to be steadfast in their faith, and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Read the third chapter of the Second Epistle of Peter in connection with this last chapter of Revelation. It will be made plain to you that the second coming of Christ is a certainty; that the time is uncertain; that the attitude of believers in every generation should be that of expectancy; and that his coming, when it does take place, will be sudden and surprising to the many, despite the warnings in mercy given. This exultant response has in it the spring of an undying hope, the energy of an unfailing power. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." All the resources of the gospel of Christ are reckoned up, and all its agencies are summoned for the service which will reward each faithful worker with salvation and bring in God's own good time the full and final triumph of that gospel in all the world.

The Spirit and the bride say: "Come." That is the keynote. The Holy Spirit and the Church

are inseparable. Without the Holy Spirit the Church is not a living organism, but a dead body. The Spirit and the bride speak with one voice. The dead Church is dumb. The living Church voices to the world the invitation of the Lord Jesus to come unto him and be saved. The Holy Spirit calls by the word of God, by awakening the consciences of men, and by all the means of grace. The Church calls through all her members, ordinances, and agencies. It is a blessed truth: In a living Church where there is living faith in the living Christ, every soul in vital connection with it, and everything included in its ordinances and agencies, becomes a channel for the grace of God.

The hearer of the invitation, listening to the voice of the Church, and moved by the Holy Spirit, accepts the call, and is glad. Feeling the blessedness of the new life of the Lord in his soul, he repeats the invitation to others. This is an infallible test of the genuineness of discipleship: every recipient of this salvation wishes to be also a dispenser of it. Every true convert echoes the invitation of the militant Church and her indwelling Spirit: “Come.”

The invitation is as wide in its scope as the needs and yearnings of humanity. “If any man thirst,

let him come unto me and drink," said Jesus while he was yet in the flesh. Let him that is athirst come. The way is open for whosoever will. Faith is the choice of the will. The water of life flows freely, abundantly for all who choose. This blessing of all blessings is without money and without price. God is no respecter of persons. He respects only character, reading the thoughts and intents of the heart. All the fitness he requires is to feel the need of Himself.

The happy consummation is hastening on. "Surely I come quickly," says our Lord. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," our hearts reply. It is the keynote of the song which will be sung by the saints as they march. They know not the day nor the hour of his coming, but they are ready to meet him at his appearing. Pass on the glad word: "Come, Lord Jesus."

Just before his death Robert Hall exclaimed: "O, the sufferings of this body!" His wife then asking him, "But you are comfortable in your mind?" he answered, "Very comfortable," adding, "Come, Lord Jesus, come." He then hesitated, as if unable to utter the next word, and one of his daughters added, "quickly;" whereupon he gave her a look expressive of the utmost delight.

EPILOGUE.

THE golden thread running through the foregoing chapters is the truth that all of God's dealings with the souls of men is in accordance with law, one touch of his grace tuning the soul for another. The discerning reader will see that this thread becomes very thin at some points, but the writer trusts that it is never wholly lost. The sum of what he intended to say may be expressed in the words of St. Paul: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." That is to say, receptivity measures importation: they that ask receive; the hungry are fed; earnestness of endeavor measures achievement; they that exercise themselves unto godliness shall attain. Summarily, coöperative effort invites and secures the help of God in every true Christian life. We are workers together with him. However weak our efforts may be, his help is almighty; the two put together have never failed. Sincerity, therefore, is the only condition of success in the Christian life. Here endeth these Meditations.



